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# HISTORICAL THEOLOGY

A REVIEW OF THE PRINCIPAL DOCTRINAL DISCUSSIONS  
IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH SINCE  
THE APOSTOLIC AGE.

BY THE LATE

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### JUSTIFICATION.

WE now proceed to the consideration of the important subject of Justification; and it will be proper to enter somewhat more fully into the investigation of this topic than those which we have hitherto examined. This was the great fundamental distinguishing doctrine of the Reformation, and was regarded by all the Reformers as of primary and paramount importance. The leading charge which they adduced against the Church of Rome was, that she had corrupted and perverted the doctrine of Scripture upon this subject in a way that was dangerous to the souls of men; and it was mainly by the exposition, enforcement, and application of the true doctrine of God's word in regard to it, that they assailed and overturned the leading doctrines and practices of the Papal system. There is no subject which possesses more of intrinsic importance than attaches to this one, and there is none with respect to which the Reformers were more thoroughly harmonious in their sentiments. All who believe that the truth on this subject had been greatly corrupted in the Church of Rome, and that the doctrine taught by the Reformers respecting it was scriptural and true, must necessarily regard the restoration of sound doctrine upon this point as the most important service which the Reformers were made instrumental by God in rendering to the church.

It is above all things important, that men, if they have broken the law of God, and become liable to the punishment which the law denounces against transgression,—and that this is, indeed, the

state of men by nature is of course now assumed,—should know whether there be any way in which they may obtain the pardon and deliverance they need; and if so, what that way is. And it is the doctrine of justification as taught in Scripture which alone affords a satisfactory answer to the question. The subject thus bears most directly and immediately upon men's relation to God and their everlasting destiny, and is fraught with unspeakable practical importance to every human being. It is assumed now that the condition of men by nature is such in point of fact,—that some change or changes must be effected regarding them in order to their escaping fearful evil and enjoying permanent happiness; and it is in this way that the doctrine of justification is connected with that of original sin, as the nature and constituent elements of the *disease* must determine the nature and qualities of the *remedy* that may be fitted to cure or remove it.

There is, indeed, as must be evident even upon the most cursory survey of what Scripture teaches concerning the recovery and salvation of lost men, a great subject or class of subjects, that is intermediate between the general state of mankind as fallen and lost, and the deliverance and restoration of men individually. And this is the work of Christ as mediator, and the general place or function assigned to the Holy Spirit in the salvation of sinners. The Scripture represents the whole human race as involved by the fall in a state of sin and misery. It represents God as looking with compassion and love upon the lost race of man, and as devising a method of effecting and securing their salvation. It describes this divine method of saving sinners as founded on, or rather as consisting substantially in, this,—that God sent His Son into the world to assume human nature, and to suffer and die in order to procure or purchase for them salvation, and everything which salvation might involve or require. And hence, in turning our attention from men's actual condition of sin and misery to the remedy which has been provided, the first great subject which naturally presents itself to our contemplation and study is the person and the work of the Mediator, or the investigation of these three questions,—viz., first, Who and what was this Saviour of sinners whom the Scriptures set before us? secondly, What is it that He has done in order to save men from ruin, and to restore them to happiness? and, thirdly, In what way is it that His work, or what He did and suffered, bears upon the accomplishment of

the great object which it was designed to effect? Now, the first two of these subjects,—*i.e.*, the person and the work of Christ, or His divinity and atonement,—did not form subjects of controversial discussion between the Reformers and the Romanists. The Church of Rome has always held the proper divinity and the vicarious atonement of Christ; and though these great doctrines have been so corrupted and perverted by her as to be in a great measure practically neutralized, and though it is very important to point out this, yet these subjects cannot be said to constitute a point of the proper controversy between the Church of Rome and the Protestants, and they were not in point of fact discussed between the Romanists and the Reformers. In all the controversies between them, the divinity and the vicarious atonement of Christ were assumed as topics in which there was no material difference of opinion in formal profession,—doctrines which each party was entitled to take for granted in arguing with the other. The subject, indeed, of the divinity and atonement of our Saviour did not occupy much of the attention of any portion of the church, as subjects of controversial discussion, during the sixteenth century; for the works of Socinus, who first gave to anti-Trinitarian views, and to the denial of a vicarious atonement, a plausible and imposing aspect, did not excite much attention till about the end of this century, and the controversies which they occasioned took place chiefly in the succeeding one. I propose, therefore, following the chronological order, to postpone for the present any account of the discussions which have taken place concerning the divinity and atonement of Christ.

The sum and substance of the great charge which the Reformers adduced against the Church of Rome was, that while she proclaimed to men with a considerable measure of accuracy who Christ was, and what it was that He had done for the salvation of sinners, she yet perverted the gospel of the grace of God, and endangered the salvation of men's souls, by setting before them erroneous and unscriptural views of the grounds on which, and the process through which, the blessings that Christ had procured for mankind at large were actually bestowed upon men individually, and of the way and manner in which men individually became possessed of them, and attained ultimately to the full and permanent enjoyment of them. This was the subject that may be said to have been discussed between the Reformers and the

Romanists under the head of justification, and I need say nothing more to show its paramount practical importance. There can be no difference of opinion as to the importance of the general subject which has been indicated; but there have been occasionally discussions in more modern times upon the question whether the errors of the Church of Rome upon this subject are so important and dangerous as they are often represented to be, and whether they were of sufficient magnitude to warrant the views entertained by the Reformers upon this subject, and the course of practical procedure which they based upon these views. When more lax and unsound views of doctrine began to prevail in the Protestant churches, some of their divines lost their sense of the magnitude of the Romish errors upon the subject of justification, and began to make admissions, that the differences between them and the Romanists upon this point were not so vital as the Reformers had supposed them to be; and the Romanists, ever on the watch to take advantage of anything that seems fitted to promote the interests of their church, were not slow to avail themselves of these concessions.\*

There are two different and opposite lines of policy which Romish controversialists have pursued upon this subject, according as seemed to be most expedient for their interests at the time. Sometimes they have represented the doctrine of the Reformers upon the subject of justification as something hideous and monstrous,—as overturning the foundations of all morality, and fitted only to produce universal wickedness and profligacy; and at other times they have affected a willingness to listen to the grounds on which Protestants defend themselves from this charge, to admit that these grounds are not altogether destitute of weight, and that, consequently, there is not so great a difference between their doctrine in substance and that of the Church of Rome. They then enlarge upon the important influence which the alleged errors of the Church of Rome on the subject of justification had

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\* Archbishop Wake, in his Exposition of the Doctrine of the Church of England, in reply to Bossuet's Exposition of the Catholic Church, gives up our whole controversy with the Church of Rome on this subject; and to give a specimen of modern High-

churchmen, Perceval, in his "Roman Schism Illustrated" (p. 365), says, that "ground for condemnation of the Church of Rome, as touching the main positions of this doctrine, is not to be found in the decrees of the Council of Trent."



in producing the Reformation,—quote some of the passages which show the paramount importance which the first Reformers attached to this subject,—and proceed to draw the inference that the Reformation was founded upon misrepresentation and calumny, since it appears, and has been admitted even by learned Protestants, that the errors of the Church of Rome, even if they were to admit for the sake of argument that she had erred, are not nearly so important as the Reformers had represented them to be.\*

It is only to this second line of policy, which represents the difference on the subject of justification as comparatively insignificant, and makes use, for this purpose, of some concessions of Protestant writers, that we mean at present to advert. In following out this line of policy, Popish controversialists usually employ an artifice which I had formerly occasion to expose,—viz., taking the statements of the Reformers made in the earlier period of their labours, and directed against the general strain of the public teaching, oral and written, that then generally obtained in the Church of Rome, and comparing them with the cunning and cautious decrees of the Council of Trent upon the subject of justification. We are willing to confine our charge against the Church of Rome, as such, at least so far as the sixteenth century is concerned, to what we can prove to be sanctioned by the Council of Trent; and, indeed, there was not in existence, at the commencement of the Reformation, anything that could be said to be a formal deliverance upon the subject of justification to which the Church of Rome could be proved to be officially committed. But we must expose the injustice done to the Reformers, when their statements, expressly and avowedly directed against the teaching then generally prevalent in the Church of Rome, are represented, as they often are, by modern Popish controversialists,—and Möehler, in his *Symbolism*, with all his pretensions to candour and fairness, lays himself open to this charge,—as directed against the decrees of the Council of Trent, which were prepared with much care and caution after the subject had been fully discussed, and in the preparation of which no small skill and ingenuity were

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\* Jurieu, in his "Prejugés Légitimes contre le Papisme," Part ii., c. xxv., pp. 307-10, points out the inconsistency between the course taken by Nicole, and that taken by Arnauld, upon this subject.

employed to evade the force of the arguments of the Reformers, and to conceal or gloss over *what* they had most successfully exposed. I had occasion formerly to quote or refer to an extract from Melancthon, written in 1536, when he was invited by Francis I. into France, in which he states the great improvement which had taken place, and the much nearer approach which had been exhibited to Protestant principles, in the statements *then* commonly made by Romanists upon justification and other subjects, as compared with those which prevailed when Luther began his work; and though the application which Melancthon made of this consideration was far from being creditable to his firmness or his sagacity, yet it was undoubtedly true, to a large extent, as a statement of a fact.

I may mention one striking and important instance in which the Council of Trent may be said to have modified and softened the erroneous doctrine which was previously prevalent in the Church of Rome upon this subject. It was the general doctrine of the schoolmen,—it was universally taught in the Church of Rome at the commencement of the Reformation,—it was explicitly maintained by most of the Popish controversialists who, previously to the Council of Trent, came forward to oppose the Reformers, that men in their natural state, before they were justified and regenerated, could, and must, do certain good things by which they merited or deserved the grace of forgiveness and regeneration,—not indeed with the merit of condignity,—for that true and proper merit, in the strictest sense, was reserved for the good deeds of men already justified,—but with what was called the merit of congruity,—a distinction too subtle to be generally and popularly apprehended. Now, of this merit of congruity,—so prominent and important a feature of the Romish theology before and at the commencement of the Reformation, and so strenuously assailed by Luther,—the Council of Trent has taken no direct notice whatever. The substance, indeed, of the error may be said to be virtually retained in the decisions of the council upon the subject of what it calls dispositives or preparatives for justification; but the error cannot be said to be very clearly or directly sanctioned; and the council has made a general declaration, that\* “none of those things which precede justification, whether faith or works,

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\* Sess. vi., C. viii.

merit the grace of justification itself,"—a declaration, however, it should be observed, which has not prevented most subsequent Romish writers from reviving the old doctrine of *meritum de congruo* before justification. If it be fair on the one hand that the Church of Rome, as such, should be judged by the decisions of the Council of Trent,—at least until it be shown that some other decision has been given by which the church, as such, was bound, as by the bull *Unigenitus*,—it is equally fair that the Reformers, who wrote before the council, should be judged, as to the correctness of their representations, by the doctrine which generally obtained in the Church of Rome at the time when these representations were made. But while this consideration should be remembered, in order that we may do justice to the Reformers, and guard against the influence of an artifice which Popish controversialists in modern times often employ in order to excite a prejudice against them, yet it is admitted that the question as to what is the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon the subject of justification must be determined chiefly by an examination of the decisions of the Council of Trent; and we hope to be able to show, that notwithstanding all the caution and skill employed in framing its decrees, they contain a large amount of anti-scriptural error, and that they misrepresent and pervert the method of salvation in a way which, *when viewed in connection with the natural tendencies* of men, is fitted to exert a most injurious influence upon the salvation of men's souls. Turretine,\* in asserting the importance of the differences between Protestants and the Church of Rome on the subject of justification, and adverting also to the attempts which have been made by some Protestant writers to represent these differences as unimportant, has the following statement: "Licet verò nonnulli ex Pontificiis cordatioribus vi veritatis victi sanius cæteris de hoc articulo senserint et locuti sint. Nec desint etiam ex Nostris, qui studio minuendarum Controversiarum ducti, censeant circa illum non tantam esse dissidii materiam, et non paucas hic esse logomachias. Certum tamen est non verbales, sed reales multas, et magni momenti controversias nobis cum Pontificiis adhuc intercedere in hoc argumento, ut ex sequentibus fiet manifestum."

Perhaps the fullest and most elaborate attempt made by any

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\* Loc. xvi., Quæst. i., sec. ii.

Protestant writer of eminence to show that the difference between Protestants and Romanists on the subject of justification is not of very great importance, is to be found in the "Theses Theologicæ" of Le Blanc, often called the Theses Sedanenses, because their author was Professor of Theology in the French Protestant University of Sedan, at a period, however, shortly before the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, when the French Protestant Church in general had very considerably declined from the doctrinal orthodoxy of the Reformation, though it still contained some very able opponents of Popery, men qualified to contend with Bossuet, Arnauld, and Nicole. Le Blanc's Theses is a work of much ingenuity and erudition; and it contains much matter that is fitted to be useful in the history of theology, though it should be read with much caution, as it exhibits a strong tendency on the part of its author to explain away, and to make light of, differences in doctrinal matters, which are of no small importance in the scheme of divine truth. The course of argument adopted by Le Blanc, in order to prove that there is no very material difference between Protestants and Romanists on this point, is not of a very fair or satisfactory kind, and gives us much more the impression of a man who had laid it down as a sort of task to himself just to exert all his ingenuity, and to employ all his erudition, in explaining away the apparent differences among contending parties, than of one who was candidly and impartially seeking after the truth. It consists not so much in comparing the declarations of the Reformed confessions with those of the Council of Trent, as in collecting together all the best or most Protestant passages he could find in any Popish authors, and all the worst or most Popish passages he could find in any Protestant authors; and then in showing that there was really no very great difference between them. The unfairness of this mode of argument is too obvious to need to be dwelt upon. It is easy to show that there have been Popish writers whose views upon religious subjects were sounder than those of their church, and Protestant writers whose views were less sound than those of the Reformers and their genuine followers. But the only important questions are: What is the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject? in what respects does it differ from that taught by the Reformers, and embodied in the confessions of Protestant churches? in what way does the word of God decide upon these differences? what is



their real value or importance? and how does it bear upon the general scheme of Christian truth, and upon the spiritual welfare of men?"\*

The more general considerations on which Le Blanc, and Grotius, and other men who have laboured to show that there is no very material difference between Protestants and the Church of Rome on the subject of justification, have mainly proceeded, are these,—that the Church of Rome ascribes the justification of sinners to the grace of God and to the merits of Christ, and denies merit to men themselves in the matter. Now, it is true that the Council of Trent has made general statements to this effect; but, notwithstanding all this, it is quite possible to show that their general declarations upon these points are virtually contradicted or neutralized,—practically at least, and sometimes even theoretically,—by their more specific statements upon some of the topics involved in the detailed exposition of the subject; and that thus it can be proved, that they do not really ascribe the justification of sinners wholly to the grace of God and to the work of Christ,—that they do not wholly exclude human merit, but ascribe to men themselves, and to their own powers, a real share in the work of their own salvation; and that while this can be proved to be true of their doctrine as it stands theoretically, their scheme, as a whole, is also, moreover, so constructed as to be fitted, when viewed in connection with the natural tendencies of the human heart, to foster presumption and self-confidence, to throw obstacles in the way of men's submitting themselves to the divine method of justification, and to frustrate the great end which the gospel scheme of salvation was, in all its parts, expressly designed and intended to accomplish,—viz., that, as our Confession of Faith says,† “both the exact justice and the rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners.”

\* It is amusing and instructive to observe the use to which Nicole turns the labours of Le Blanc in this matter, in his “*Préjugés Légitimes contre les Calvinistes*,” tome i., pp. 269, 274-6. Animadversions on Le Blanc in this matter are to be found in Witsius De Econ. Fœd., Lib. iii., c. viii., secs. xlix.-lv., and De Moor Comment. in Marck. Compend., tom. iv., pp. 732-3, 753; Owen, vol. xi., pp. 84-5, 161

(or, in original edition, pp. 87, 179). For an exposure of other attempts to represent the differences between Protestants and Romanists on the subject of justification as unimportant, see the controversy between Grotius and Andrew Rivet.—Rivet’s “*Vindiciæ Evangelicæ*,” and Heidegger’s “*Dissertationes*,” tom. i., Dissertatio xi., p. 290.

† West. Con., c. xi., sec. 3.

*Sec. I.—Popish and Protestant Views.*

In dealing with the subject of justification, we must, first of all, attempt to form a clear and correct apprehension of what is the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this topic, as opposed to that which the Reformers deduce from the word of God. Justification, it is admitted on both sides, is descriptive generally of the change or changes, in whole or in part, that must take place in respect of men individually, in order to their escaping from the evils of their natural condition, and attaining to happiness and heaven. The nature of the change or changes necessary must depend upon the actual features of men's natural condition, the evils from which they must be delivered. And the way and manner in which they are brought about must be somewhat regulated by the natural powers or capacities of men themselves to procure or effect them, or to assist in procuring or effecting them. It is admitted, also, that the two leading features of men's natural condition, which render salvation necessary, and must in some measure determine its character, are guilt and depravity,—or liability to punishment because of transgression of God's law, and a tendency or inclination, more or less powerful and pervading, to violate its requirements and prohibitions. The corresponding changes, called graces, because admitted to be in some sense God's gifts, and called the blessings or benefits of redemption, because admitted to be in some sense procured for men by what Christ has done for them, are an alteration upon men's state or condition in relation to God and His law, whereby their guilt is cancelled, their sins are pardoned, and they are brought into a state of acceptance and favour; and a change upon their actual moral character, whereby the tendency to sin is mortified and subdued, and a state of heart and motive more accordant with what God's law requires is produced. Thus far, and when these general terms are employed, there is no material difference of opinion; though the second change,—that upon men's moral character,—is usually called by Protestants the regeneration or renovation of man's moral nature, and by Papists the infusion of righteousness or justice,—righteousness or justice denoting, in their sense of it, actual conformity to what God requires, either in point of internal character (*justitia habitualis*) or of outward actions (*justitia actualis*).

It is admitted, further, that these changes upon men's state and character, necessary to their salvation and ultimate happiness, are to be traced, in general, to the grace or kindness of God, who confers or produces them, and to the work of Christ, who in some way has procured or purchased them for men. And the sum and substance of all that the Reformers demanded, as necessary to the pure preaching of the gospel,—the scriptural exposition of the leading principles of the method of salvation,—was, that the conceded ascription of these changes to the grace of God and the work of Christ, should be literally and honestly maintained, according to the proper import of the words, and should be fully carried out, in the more detailed exposition of the subject, without any other principles or elements being introduced into it which might virtually and practically, if not formally and theoretically, involve a denial or modification of them; while the great charge which they adduced against the Church of Rome was, that, in their fuller and more minute exposition of the way and manner in which these changes were effected upon men individually, they did introduce principles or elements which, more or less directly, deprived the grace of God and the work of Christ of the place and influence which the sacred Scriptures assigned to them.

As the change upon men's state and condition from guilt and condemnation to pardon and acceptance is, substantially, a change in the aspect in which God regards them, or rather in the way in which He resolves thenceforth to deal with them, and to treat them, it must, from the nature of the case, be an act of God, and it must be wholly God's act,—an act in producing or effecting, which men themselves cannot be directly parties; and the only way in which they can in any measure contribute to bring it about, is by their meriting it, or doing something to deserve it, at God's hand, and thereby inducing Him to effect the change or to perform the act. It was as precluding the possibility of this, that the Reformers attached so much importance to the doctrine which we formerly had occasion to explain and illustrate,—viz., that all the actions of men previous to regeneration are only and wholly sinful; and it was, of course, in order to leave room for men in some sense meriting gifts from God, or deserving for themselves the blessings which Christ procured for mankind, that the Council of Trent anathematized it.

The other great change is an actual effect wrought upon men

themselves, of which they are directly the subjects, and in producing or effecting which there is nothing, in the nature of the case, though there may be in the actual character and capacities of men, to prevent them from taking a part. The Protestant doctrine of men's natural inability to will anything spiritually good, which has been illustrated in connection with the doctrine of original sin, of course precludes them from doing anything that can really improve their moral character in God's sight, until this inability be taken away by an external and superior power; while the doctrine of the Council of Trent about man's freedom or power to will and do good remaining to some extent notwithstanding the fall, which forms part of their decree on the subject of justification, paves the way, and was no doubt so intended, for ascribing to men themselves some real efficiency in the renovation of their moral natures.

From the view taken by the Church of Rome of the nature and import of justification, the whole subject of the way and manner in which both these changes are effected, in or upon men individually, was often discussed in the sixteenth century under this one head; though one of the first objects to which the Reformers usually addressed themselves in discussing it, was to ascertain and to bring out what, according to Scripture usage, justification really is, and what it comprehends. The decree of the fathers of Trent upon this important subject (session vi.), comprehended in sixteen chapters and thirty-three canons, is characterized by vagueness and verbiage, confusion, obscurity, and unfairness. It is not very easy on several points to make out clearly and distinctly what were the precise doctrines which they wished to maintain and condemn. Some months were spent by the Council in consultations and intrigues about the formation of their decree upon this subject. And yet, notwithstanding all their pains,—perhaps we should rather say, *because* of them,—they have not brought out a very distinct and intelligible view of what they meant to teach upon some of its departments.

The vagueness, obscurity, and confusion of the decree of the Council of Trent upon this subject, contrast strikingly with the clearness and simplicity that obtain in the writings of the Reformers and the confessions of the Reformed churches regarding it. There were not wanting two or three rash and incautious expressions of Luther's, upon this as upon other subjects, of which, by a policy I formerly had occasion to expose, the



Council did not scruple to take an unfair advantage, by introducing some of them into their canons, in a way fitted to excite an unwarrantable prejudice against the doctrine of the Reformers. And it is true that Luther and Melancthon, in some of their earlier works, did seem to confine their statements, when treating of this subject, somewhat too exclusively to the act of faith by which men are justified, without giving sufficient prominence to the object of faith, or that which faith apprehends or lays hold of, and which is the ground or basis of God's act in justifying,—viz., the righteousness of Christ. But though their views upon this subject became more clear and enlarged, yet they held in substance from the beginning, and brought out at length, and long before the Council of Trent, most fully and clearly the great doctrine of the Reformation,—viz., that justification in Scripture is properly descriptive only of a change upon men's legal state and condition, and not on their moral character, though a radical change of character invariably accompanies it; that it is a change from a state of guilt and condemnation to a state of forgiveness and acceptance; and that sinners are justified, or become the objects of this change, solely by a gratuitous act of God, but founded only upon the righteousness of Christ (not on any righteousness of their own),—a righteousness imputed to them, and thus made theirs, not on account of anything they do or can do to merit or procure it, but through the instrumentality of faith alone, by which they apprehend or lay hold of what has been provided for them, and is freely offered to them.

Let us now attempt to bring out plainly and distinctly the doctrine which the Council of Trent laid down in opposition to these scriptural doctrines of the Reformers. The first important question is, what justification is, or what the word justification means; and upon this point it must be admitted that the doctrine of the Council of Trent is sufficiently explicit. It defines\* justification to be “*translatio ab eo statu, in quo homo nascitur filius primi Adæ, in statum gratiæ et adoptionis filiorum Dei per secundum Adam Jesum Christum, salvatorem nostrum,*”—words which, in their fair and natural import, may be held to include under justification the whole of the change that is needful to be effected in men in order to their salvation, as comprehending their

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\* Sess. vi., C. iv.

deliverance both from guilt and depravity. But that this is the meaning which they attached to the word justification,—that they regarded all this as comprehended under it,—is put beyond all doubt, by what they say in the seventh chapter, where they expressly define justification to be, “non sola peccatorum remissio, sed et sanctificatio et renovatio interioris hominis per voluntariam susceptionem gratiæ et donorum.” Justification, then, according to the doctrine of the Church of Rome, includes or comprehends not only the remission of sin, or deliverance from guilt, but also the sanctification or renovation of man’s moral nature, or deliverance from depravity. In short, they comprehend under the one name or head of justification, what Protestants—following, as they believe, the guidance of Scripture—have always divided into the two heads of justification and regeneration, or justification and sanctification, when the word sanctification is used in its widest sense, as descriptive of the whole process, originating in regeneration, by which depraved men are restored to a conformity to God’s moral image. Now, the discussion upon this point turns wholly upon this question, What is the sense in which the word justification and its cognates are used in Scripture? And this is manifestly a question of fundamental importance, in the investigation of this whole subject, inasmuch as, from the nature of the case, its decision must exert a most important influence upon the whole of men’s views regarding it. At present, however, I confine myself to a mere statement of opinions without entering into any examination of their truth, as I think it better, in the first instance, to bring out fully at once what the whole doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject, as contrasted with that of the Reformers, really is.

It may be proper, however, before leaving this topic, to advert to a misrepresentation that has been often given of the views of the Reformers, and especially of Calvin, upon this particular point. When Protestant divines began, in the seventeenth century, to corrupt the scriptural doctrine of justification, and to deviate from the doctrinal orthodoxy of the Reformation, they thought it of importance to show that justification meant merely the remission or forgiveness of sin, or guilt, to the exclusion of, or without comprehending, what is usually called the acceptance of men’s persons, or their positive admission into God’s favour,—or their receiving from God, not only the pardon of their sins, or im-

munity from punishment, but also a right or title to heaven and eternal life. And in support of this view, these men appealed to the authority of the Reformers, and especially of Calvin. Now it is quite true, that Calvin has asserted again and again that justification comprehends only, or consists in, the remission or forgiveness of sin or guilt. But I have no doubt that a careful and deliberate examination of all that Calvin has written upon this point,\* will fully establish these two positions,—first, that when Calvin asserted that justification consisted only in the remission of sin, he meant this simply as a denial of the Popish doctrine, that it is not only the remission of sin, but also the sanctification or renovation of the inner man,—this being the main and, indeed, the only error upon the point which he was called upon formally to oppose; and, secondly, that Calvin has at least as frequently and as explicitly described justification as comprehending, not only remission of sin in the strict and literal sense, but also positive acceptance or admission into the enjoyment of God's favour,—“*gratuita Dei acceptio*,” as he often calls it,—including the whole of the change effected upon men's state or legal condition in God's sight, as distinguished from the change effected upon their character. This is one of the numerous instances, constantly occurring, that illustrate how unfair it is to adduce the authority of eminent writers on disputed questions which had never really been presented to them,—which they had never entertained or decided; and how necessary it often is, in order to forming a correct estimate of some particular statements of an author, to examine with care and deliberation all that he has written upon the subject to which they refer, and also to be intelligently acquainted with the way and manner in which the whole subject was discussed at the time *on both sides*.

When the Council of Trent defined regeneration to be a component part or a constituent element of justification, along with pardon or forgiveness, they were probably induced to do so partly because they could appeal to some of the fathers, and even to Augustine, in support of this use of the word, but also because their real object or intention was to make this sanctification, or

\* Bishop O'Brien's Attempt to Explain and Establish the Doctrine of Justification by Faith only, in Ten Sermons; London, 1833; Note 12, pp.

346-7; (Note M., 2d ed., 1862 (Eds.). Bellarmine, “De Justificatione,” Lib. ii., c. i., admits this in regard to Calvin.

infused or inherent righteousness, as Romanists commonly call it, the cause or ground of the forgiveness of sin. A change of legal state, and a change of moral character, are things so manifestly different in their own nature, that they could scarcely avoid attempting some separate explanation of them, and of the way in which they were conferred or effected, even though they might regard them as both comprehended under the name justification. The question, Upon what ground or consideration does God forgive men's sins? or, in other words, To what is it that He has regard, when, with respect to any individual, He passes an act of forgiveness?—this question, viewed by itself as a distinct independent topic, is obviously one which requires and demands an answer, whether the answer to it may exhaust the exposition of the subject of *justification* with reference to its cause or not. The Reformers, after proving from the word of God that justification, according to Scripture usage, described only a change of state, and not a change of character, strenuously demanded that this question, as to the cause or ground of forgiveness, or as to what it was to which God had respect, when, in the case of any individual, He cancelled his guilt, and admitted him into the enjoyment of His favour and friendship, should be distinctly and explicitly answered; and, accordingly, Protestant divines in general, when they are discussing the subject of justification, understood in the limited scriptural sense of the word, and explaining the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon the subject, make it their object to extract from the decree of the Council of Trent any materials that bear directly upon this point.

The council, indeed, have not presented this subject nakedly and distinctly, as in fairness they ought to have done, but have made use of their general definition of justification, as comprehending also regeneration, for involving the whole subject in a considerable measure of obscurity. What may be fairly deduced from their statements as to the cause or ground of forgiveness or pardon, viewed as a distinct topic by itself, is this: After defining justification to be not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renovation of the inner man, they proceed to explain the causes of this justification; and in doing so, they make a very liberal use of scholastic phrases and distinctions. The final cause, they say, is the glory of God and Christ, and eternal life; the efficient cause is God (*Deus misericors*) exercis-



ing compassion ; the meritorious cause is Jesus Christ, who by His sufferings and death merited justification for us, and satisfied the Father in our room ; the instrumental cause is the sacrament of baptism ; and “ the only formal cause is the righteousness (justitia) of God, not that by which He Himself is righteous, but that by which He makes us righteous, by which we, receiving it from Him, are renewed in the Spirit of our mind, and are not only reckoned or reputed, but are called and are truly righteous.” In this last statement of the Council about the formal cause of justification being only an actual righteousness which God gives us or infuses into us, and which thereby comes to be inherent in us, it would seem as if they had tacitly intended to describe, as they ought to have done openly and plainly, rather the formal cause or ground of forgiveness, or of the change of state, than of justification in their own wide sense of it ; for it is evident that the righteousness, or actual personal conformity of character to God’s law, which He bestows upon men by His Spirit, cannot be, as they assert it is, the formal cause of that sanctification or renovation of the inner man which they make a part of justification, and to which, therefore, everything that is set forth as a cause of justification must be causally applicable. This inherent righteousness, which God bestows upon men or infuses into them, might be said to be identical with the sanctification of the inner man, or, with more strict exactness, might be said to be an effect, or result, or consequence of it, but it cannot in any proper sense be a cause of it.

This personal righteousness bestowed by God might, indeed, be said to be the formal cause of *forgiveness*, if it were intended to convey the idea that it is the ground or basis on which God’s act in forgiving rests, or that to which He has a regard or respect when He cancels a man’s guilt, and admits him to the enjoyment of His favour. And this is indeed the meaning which accords best with the general strain of the council’s statements. It is not necessarily inconsistent, in every sense, with their making Christ and His work the meritorious cause of justification. In making Christ and His work the meritorious cause of justification, they, of course, in accordance with their definition of justification, make this the meritorious cause, equally and alike of forgiveness and of renovation, the two parts of which justification consists, or, as Bellarmine expresses it, “ mortem Christi, quæ pretium fuit redemptionis, non solum causam fuisse remissionis peccatorum, sed etiam

internæ renovationis.”\* And this Protestants regard as in itself a great general scriptural truth, though they believe that it errs, both by excess and defect, *when it is put forth as a part of the teaching of Scripture on the subject of justification*. It errs by excess, in comprehending renovation as well as forgiveness under the head of justification; and it errs by defect, in representing the work or righteousness of Christ as standing in no other or closer relation to forgiveness or acceptance than as being merely its meritorious cause. It is only with this second error that we have at present to do. The council not only makes the work or righteousness of Christ equally and alike the *meritorious* cause of forgiveness and renovation, but it expressly denies (can. x.) that men are *formally* justified by Christ’s righteousness, or, in other words, that Christ’s righteousness is the formal cause of our justification; and it expressly asserts, as we have seen, that the only formal cause of our justification is the personal righteousness which God bestows or infuses into men. Bellarmine carefully guards against the inference that, because the eleventh canon condemns the doctrine that we are justified by the righteousness of Christ alone, it admitted by implication that we are justified formally by it at all.†

Now, it is plainly impossible to make one consistent and harmonious doctrine out of these various positions, affirmative and negative, which the council has laid down, *except upon the assumption* that the council really meant to teach that there is no direct and immediate connection between the work or righteousness of Christ and the forgiveness of the sins of men individually; and to represent Christ as merely *meriting* the communication to men of personal righteousness, and thereby, or through the medium of this personal righteousness which He merited for them, indirectly or remotely meriting the forgiveness of sin, of which this personal righteousness, infused and inherent, as they describe it, is the direct and immediate cause. That the Council of Trent really intended to teach *this* doctrine, though it is brought out somewhat obscurely, and though we are obliged to infer it from a careful comparison of its different statements upon the subject, is clearly shown by Chemnitius in his valuable work, “*Examen Concilii Tridentini*,” not only from an examination of the decrees themselves, but from

\* De Justificatione, Lib. ii., cap. vi.

† Ibid., Lib. ii., cap. ii.

the statements of Andradius, an eminent Popish divine, who was present at the council, and afterwards published a work in defence of its decisions.\* That this is the doctrine which the council intended to teach, and that it is in consequence the ordinary recognised doctrine of the Church of Rome upon the subject, is confirmed, or rather established, by the consideration that the generality of Romish writers are accustomed, without any doubt or hesitation, to give *this* as *the state of the question* between them and Protestants upon this topic,—viz., Whether the cause of our justification be a righteousness inherent in us or not? or this, Whether the cause of our justification be a righteousness infused into and inherent in us; or an external righteousness,—that is, the righteousness of Christ,—imputed to us? And that in discussing this question, *so stated*, they just labour to produce evidence from Scripture that *that* to which God has an immediate respect or regard in forgiving any man's sins, and admitting him to the enjoyment of His favour, is, not the righteousness of Christ, but an infused and inherent personal righteousness. As this is a point of some importance in order to a right apprehension of the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon the subject, it may be proper to produce some evidence of this position.

Bellarmino says,† “Status totius controversiæ revocari potest ad hanc simplicem quæstionem, sitne formalis causa absolutæ justificationis, justitia in nobis inhærens, an non?” and then he proceeds to show that the determination of *this* question in the affirmative at once overturns all the leading errors of the Reformers upon the whole subject of the causes and grounds of justification: “Omnes refutantur, si probetur justitia inhærens, quæ absolutè et simpliciter justificet;” and more particularly, “Si justitia inhærens est formalis causa absolutæ justificationis, non igitur requiritur imputatio justitiæ Christi.”

In like manner, Dens, in his “Theologia Moralis,” says,‡ “Probo contra hæreticos: quod justificatio formaliter fiat per infusionem gratiæ habitualis inhærentis animæ, non vero per justitiam Christi nobis extrinsecè imputatam.” Perrone also, in his “Prælectiones Theologicæ,”§ lays down this proposition, as taught

\* Chemnitii Exam. Con. Trid., p. 144, Ed. 1609; see also Bp. Davenant, Prælectiones de Justitia Habituali et Actuali, c. xxvii.

† De Justificatione, Lib. ii., cap. ii.

‡ Dens' Theol. Mor., tom. ii., p. 448.

§ Perrone, Prælec. Theol., tom. i., col. 1398.

by the Council of Trent, and as being, therefore, *de fide*, or an essential binding article of faith: “*Impii formaliter non justificantur vel sola imputatione justitiæ Christi vel sola peccatorum remissione; sed justificantur per gratiam et caritatem, quæ in cordibus eorum per Spiritum Sanctum diffunditur, atque illis inhæret.*” And, in answer to the Scripture statements adduced to prove that we are justified by the righteousness of Christ, he admits that we are justified by it as the *meritorious* cause; but denies that we are justified by it as the *formal* cause.

The most eminent Protestant divines have been quite willing to admit that these statements of Popish writers give a fair account of the state of the question, and have had no hesitation in undertaking the defence of the positions which this view of the state of the question assigned to them. They have not, indeed, usually attached much weight in this matter to the scholastic distinctions about the different kinds of causes; because, as Turretine says,\* “in the matter of justification before God, the formal cause cannot be distinguished from the meritorious cause, since the formal cause, in this respect, is nothing else than that, at the sight of which, or from a regard to which, God frees us from condemnation, and accepts us to eternal life.” On these grounds Protestant writers have held themselves fully warranted in imputing to the Church of Rome the maintenance of *this* position,—viz., that *that* to which God has directly and immediately a respect or regard, in pardoning a man’s sins, and admitting him into the enjoyment of His favour, is a personal righteousness infused into that man, and inherent in him; while they have undertaken for themselves to establish from Scripture the negative of this position, and to show that *that* which is the proper ground or basis of God’s act in forgiving or accepting any man,—that to which alone He has a respect or regard when He justifies him,—is the righteousness of Christ imputed to him.

It may be proper to mention, that among orthodox Protestant divines who have agreed harmoniously in the whole substance of the doctrine of justification, there may be noticed some differences in point of phraseology on some of the topics to which we have referred, and especially with respect to the causes of justification. These differences of phraseology are not of much im-

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\* Loc. xvi., Quaest. ii., sec. v.



portance, and do not give much trouble in an investigation of this subject. Calvin sometimes spoke of justification as consisting in the remission of sins *and* the imputation of Christ's righteousness.\* But, by the imputation of Christ's righteousness in this connection, he seems to have meant nothing more than acceptance or positive admission into the enjoyment of God's favour,—the bestowal of a right or title to eternal life, as distinguished from, and going beyond, mere pardon. In any other sense,—and, indeed, in the strict and proper sense of the expression,—the statement is inaccurate; for the imputation of Christ's righteousness does not stand on the same level or platform as the remission of sins, and of course cannot go to constitute, along with it, one thing designated by the one term,—justification,—as is the case with acceptance or admission into God's favour. The imputation of Christ's righteousness, correctly understood, is to be regarded as in the order of nature preceding *both* remission and acceptance, and as being the ground or basis, or the meritorious impulsive or formal cause, of them; or that to which God has respect when in any instance He pardons and accepts.†

Again, some orthodox divines have thought that the most accurate mode of speaking upon the subject, is to say that the formal cause of our justification is Christ's righteousness imputed; others, that it is the imputation of Christ's righteousness; and a third party, among whom is Dr Owen, in his great work on justification,‡ think that there is no formal cause of justification, according to the strict scholastic meaning of the expression; while all orthodox divines concur in maintaining against the Church of Rome, that, to adopt Dr Owen's words, the righteousness of Christ "is that whereby, and wherewith, a believing sinner is justified before God; or whereon he is accepted with God, hath his sins pardoned, is received into grace and favour, and hath a title given him unto the heavenly inheritance."§

Having thus brought out the doctrine of the Church of Rome on the subject of the meaning, nature, and ground of justification,

\* A similar mode of speaking was adopted by some Lutheran divines. *Vide* Buddæus, *Instit. Theol. Dogm.*, Lib. iv., c. iv., sec. vi.

† Turret., *Loc. xvi.*, *Quaest. iv.*

‡ Orme's edition of Owen, vol. xi., pp. 257-292.

§ For a full exposition of the differences of opinion and statement on the causes of justification, *vide* de Moor, tom. iv., pp. 682-90, and John Goodwin's *Imputatio Fidei*, P. ii., c. iv.; Davenant, *De Just.*; Appendix to Newman on Justification.

we proceed now to explain her doctrine as to its means and results. And first with respect to the *means* of justification. The Reformers were unanimous and decided in maintaining the doctrine that faith alone justified; that men were justified by faith only; and this gave rise to a great deal of discussion between them and the Romanists,—discussions bearing not only upon the import and evidence of this general position, but likewise upon the meaning and nature of justifying faith, and upon the way and manner in which faith justifies, or in which it acts or operates in the matter of justification. By the position that faith alone justifies, the Reformers meant in general that faith was the only thing in a man himself, to the exclusion of all personal righteousness, habitual or actual, of all other Christian graces and of all good works, to which his forgiveness and acceptance with God are attributed or ascribed in Scripture,—the only thing in himself which is represented in God's word as exerting anything like causality or efficiency in his obtaining justification. They did not hold that faith was the only thing which invariably accompanies justification, or even that it was the only thing required of men in order to their being justified; for they admitted that repentance was necessary to forgiveness, in accordance with the doctrine of our standards, that, “to escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin, God requireth of us repentance unto life,” as well as “faith in Jesus Christ.”\* But as repentance is never said in Scripture to justify, as men are never said to be justified by or through repentance, or by or through anything existing in themselves, except faith, the Reformers maintained that faith stood in a certain relation to justification, such as was held by no other quality or feature in men's character or conduct,—that it justified them,—nothing else about them did; that men were justified by faith, and could not be said to be justified by anything else existing in themselves, whatever might be its nature or its source.

They did not teach that this faith which alone justified was ever alone, or unaccompanied with other graces; but, on the contrary, they maintain that, to adopt the words of our Confession, † “it is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love.” Calvin, in explaining this

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\* In the Larger Catechism, Ques. |  
153, repentance is placed before faith. |

† C. xi., sec ii.

matter, says,\* “Hoc semper lectoribus testatum esse volo, quoties in hac quæstione nominamus solam fidem, non mortuam a nobis fingi, et quæ per caritatem non operatur : sed ipsam statui unicam justificationis causam. Fides ergo sola est quæ justificet : fides tamen quæ justificat, non est sola.” It is a curious fact, that while many Romish writers, and others who have corrupted the doctrine of Scripture upon this subject, have misrepresented the great doctrine of the Reformation, that faith alone justifies, as meaning or implying that nothing but faith is in any sense required of men in order to their being forgiven, or does in fact invariably exist in justified men, Bellarmine accurately and fairly lays it down as one of the leading differences between the Reformers and the Church of Rome on the subject of justifying faith, that the Reformers held, “fidem solam justificare, nunquam tamen posse esse solam,” whereas the Romanists taught, in full and exact contrast with this, “fidem non justificare solam, sed tamen posse esse solam.”†

Again, the Reformers did not ascribe to faith, in the matter of justification, any meritorious or inherent efficacy in producing the result, but regarded it simply as the instrument or hand by which a man apprehended or laid hold of, and appropriated to himself, the righteousness of Christ ; and it was only in that very general and, strictly speaking, loose and improper sense, which was consistent with this view of its function and operation in the matter, that they called it, as Calvin does in the extract above quoted from him, the cause of justification. Such were the clear and explicit doctrines of the Reformers on the subject of the means of justification, its relation to faith, and the place and function of faith in the matter.

On all these topics the Council of Trent has spoken with some degree of obscurity and unfairness, insinuating misrepresentations of the real doctrines of the Reformers, and bringing out somewhat vaguely and imperfectly what they meant to teach in opposition to them. In accordance with their principles, they could not admit that there was any sense in which faith alone justified, or in which men were justified by faith only ; for, as we have seen, they held that inherent personal righteousness was the only formal cause, and that baptism was

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\* Calvini Antid. in Sextam Ses- | † Bellarm., De Justificat., Lib. i., c.  
sionem ; in Canon. xi. | iii.

the instrumental cause of justification. Accordingly, they denied\* that a sinner is justified by faith alone, in such wise as to mean that nothing else is required to co-operate in order to the obtaining the grace of justification. Now, this is quite equivalent to denying that *in any sense* faith alone justifies: for anything which acts or operates in order to obtaining justification, may be said to justify; and as the canon clearly implies that there is always something else conjoined with faith in the matter of justification, different from faith itself, and equally with it operating in order to obtain justification, it follows that *in no sense* does faith alone justify. And, in accordance with this view, they explain the sense in which they understand the apostle's ascription of justification to faith,†—in which alone they admit that faith justifies at all,—in this way, “We are therefore, or for this reason, said to be justified by faith, because faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and the root of all justification.” By this they mean that faith justifies, or is said to justify, because, or inasmuch as, it is the chief means of producing that personal righteousness which is the true cause or ground of justification; or, as it is thus rather oddly and awkwardly explained by Bellarmine: “Fidem non tam justificare, quam justificare, ut initium, et radicem primam justificationis; hinc enim sequetur non ipsam solam justificare, sed sic eam agere in hoc negotio, quod suum est, ut etiam ceteris virtutibus locum relinquat.” The title of the chapter from which this curious extract is taken‡ is, “Fidem justificare, sed non solam, idem enim facere timorem, spem, et dilectionem,” etc. And he had previously laid down this as one of the leading differences between Protestants and Romanists on the subject of justifying faith: “Quod ipsi (the Protestants) solam fidem justificare contendunt, nos ei comites adjungimus in hoc ipso officio justificandi, sive ad justitiam disponendi.”§

Indeed, the function or place which the Council of Trent assigns to faith in this matter, is rather that of preparing or disposing men to receive justification, than of justifying; and even in this subordinate work of preparing or disposing men to receive justification, they give to faith only a co-ordinate place along with half a dozen of other virtues. For the sake of clearness, I

\* De Justificat., can. ix.  
† Sess. vi., C. viii.

‡ Bellarm., De Justificat., Lib. i.,  
cap. xiii.  
§ Ibid., cap. iii.



shall explain this important point in the words of Bellarmine, rather than in the vague and obscure verbiage which the Council of Trent has thought proper to employ upon this subject. He says, "Adversarii . . . . sola fide justificationem acquiri, sive apprehendi docent: Catholici contra, ac præsertim Synodus ipsa Tridentina (quam omnes Catholici, ut magistram sequuntur) sess. vi., cap. vi. Septem actus enumerat, quibus impii ad justitiam disponuntur, videlicet fidei, timoris, spei, dilectionis, pœnitentiæ, propositi suscipiendi sacramenti, et propositi novæ vitæ, atque observatonis mandatorum Dei."\* So that men, before they can obtain the forgiveness of their sins and the renovation of their natures—the two things in which, according to the Church of Rome, justification consists,—must exercise faith, fear, hope, love, penitence, and have a purpose of receiving the sacrament, and of leading a new and obedient life; and, even after they have done all this, they are not justified, for none of these things justifies, but only prepares or disposes to justification.

This subject, of men disposing or preparing themselves to receive justification, is an important feature in the theology of the Church of Rome, and may require a few words of explanation. First of all, it is needed only in adults: all baptized infants receive in baptism, according to the doctrine of the Church of Rome, forgiveness and regeneration, without any previous disposition or preparation,—God in baptism first renewing, and then forgiving them, and thus completely removing from them all the effects of original sin,—a doctrine, the falsehood and injurious influence of which has been already exposed; but all adults must be disposed or prepared, by exercising the seven virtues, as Romanists commonly call them, above enumerated, before they receive either forgiveness or renovation. We are not called upon at present to advert to the absurdity of the alleged antecedency of all these virtues or graces to the sanctification of the inner man, in which partly justification consists; but when we find faith placed in the very same relation to justification, as the other virtues with which it is here classed, and *even then* not allowed to justify, or to be that by which men are justified, but merely to prepare or dispose men for receiving justification, we are irresistibly constrained to ask, if this is anything like the place assigned to it, in the matter of

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\* Bellarm., De Justificat., Lib. i., cap. xii.

justification, by the Apostle Paul when *he* was expounding the way of a sinner's salvation to the Christians at Rome?

But we must at present consider what the modern Church of Rome teaches about this matter of disposing or preparing men for justification,—a subject on which the apostle certainly left the Roman Christians of his day in profound ignorance, though he seems to have intended to open up to them the whole doctrine of justification, so far as he knew it. The Council of Trent gives us scarcely any direct or explicit information as to what they mean by these seven virtues disposing or preparing men for justification, except that it is necessary that they should all exist, and be exercised, before men are forgiven and renewed, and that they exert some influence in bringing about the result. It tells us, however, that none of those things that precede justification, whether faith or works, merit or deserve the grace of justification itself; and this had so far an appearance of deference to plain scriptural principles. It is not, however, by any means certain,—nay, it is very improbable,—that the council, by this declaration, meant to take away from these preliminary and preparatory virtues anything but the strict and proper merit of condignity, which they reserved for the good works of justified men. The council does not, indeed, formally sanction, as I have already mentioned, the distinction which prevailed universally in the Church of Rome at the time when the Reformation commenced, between merit of congruity and merit of condignity. But neither has it formally nor by implication condemned it; and it is certain that most Romish writers *since* the council have continued to retain and to apply this distinction,—have regarded the decision which we are considering, merely as denying to these dispositive or preparatory works merit of condignity, and have not scrupled, notwithstanding this decision, to ascribe to them merit of congruity; or, in other words, to represent them as exerting some meritorious efficacy, though in a subordinate sense, and of an imperfect kind, in procuring for men justification. Bellarmine fully and explicitly asserts all this. He maintains that the decision of the council, that these dispositive and preparatory works do not merit justification, means merely that they do not merit it *ex condigno*,—contends that they *do* merit it *ex congruo*,—and asserts that this is the view taken by most, though not by all, Romish writers, both as to the truth of the case and the real import of the decision of

the council; from all which we are warranted in concluding, that the decision of the council, denying merit to those things which precede justification, *is* equivocal, and *was* intended to be equivocal and deceptive. Bellarmine for one,—and this is true also of the generality of Romish writers,—goes so far as to assert explicitly that these virtues are meritorious causes of justification; and he was fully warranted in doing so, if it be true that the Council of Trent did not deny, or intend to deny, to them merit of congruity; and if it be also the general doctrine of the Church of Rome, as he asserts it is, “*Potius fundari meritum de congruo in aliqua dignitate operis, quam in promissione.*”\*

There was also a great deal of controversy between the Reformers and the Romanists on the definition and nature of justifying faith, and the way and manner in which it acted or operated in the matter of justification. The Reformers generally contended that justifying faith was *fiducia*, and had its seat in the will; and the Romanists that it was merely *assensus*, and had its seat in the understanding. This is a subject, however, on which it must be admitted that there has been a considerable difference of opinion, or, at least, of statement, among orthodox Protestant divines in more modern times; and which, at least in the only sense in which it has been controverted among Protestants who were in the main orthodox, does not seem to me to be determined in the standards of our church. While the Reformers unanimously and explicitly taught that faith which alone justified did not justify by any meritorious or inherent efficacy of its own, but only as the instrument of receiving or laying hold of what God had provided,—had freely offered and regarded as the alone ground or basis on which He passed an act of forgiveness with respect to any individual, viz., the righteousness of Christ,—the Council of Trent can scarcely be said to have determined anything positive or explicit as to the office or function of faith in justification, or as to the way and manner in which it can be said to justify, beyond what is contained in the statement formerly quoted, viz., that we are said to be justified by faith for this reason, because faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and the root of all justification. There is little information given us here except this,

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\* Bellarm., De Justificat., Lib. i., c. xxi. See also Lib. i., c. xvii.; Lib. v., c. xxi.

that the reason why Scripture assigns so much prominence to faith, in the matter of justification, is, because faith is the chief means of originating and producing Christian graces and good works; while, at the same time, it should be remembered that Romanists teach, as we have seen, that it does not necessarily and invariably produce them, as Protestants hold, but that it may exist alone or unaccompanied by them.

But while the Council of Trent does not formally and explicitly teach more than this upon this point, there is nothing in the decree to preclude, and much in the general scope and spirit of its statements to countenance, the doctrine which has unquestionably been held by the great body of the most eminent Romish writers, viz., that faith has in itself some real and even meritorious efficacy,—*i.e.*, *meritum de congruo*, as already explained,—in disposing to, and in procuring or obtaining, justification. This doctrine is thus expressed by Bellarmine, who lays it down as the doctrine of the Church of Rome, “*Fidem etiam a caritate disjunctam, alicujus esse pretii, et vim habere justificandi per modum dispositionis, et impetrationis;*”\* and again, “*Fidem impetrare justificationem, . . . ac per hoc justificare per modum dispositionis ac meriti;*” and again, after stating fairly enough the doctrine of the Reformers in this way, “*Fidem non justificare per modum causæ, aut dignitatis, aut meriti, sed solum relativè, quia videlicet credendo accipit, quod Deus promittendo offert,*” he thus states in contrast the doctrine of the Church of Rome, “*Fidem justificare impetrando, ac promerendo . . . justificationem;*” and again, “*Fidem . . . impetrare, atque aliquo modo mereri justificationem;*”† while he applies similar statements to the other virtues, which, equally with faith, precede and dispose to justification, describing them expressly as meritorious causes of justification.

We have now only to advert briefly to the differences between the Romanists and the Reformers on some points which may be comprehended under the general head of the *results* or *consequences* of justification; and, first, we may explain the views respectively entertained by them, as to the way in which sins committed subsequently to justification are pardoned. The Reformers taught that these sins were pardoned upon the same ground, and through the same means, as those committed before justification,—viz.,

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\* Bellarm., De Justificat., Lib. i., cap. iii.

† Lib. i., cap. xvii.



upon the ground of Christ's righteousness, and through the exercise of faith apprehending, or laying hold of, and appropriating it. As the Church of Rome teaches that baptism is the instrumental cause of justification, so she has invented another sacrament, and established it as the only channel through which post-baptismal sins, as she commonly calls them, can be forgiven; for the Council of Trent anathematizes all who say\* that "a man who has fallen after baptism is able to receive the justice which he has lost, by faith alone, without the sacrament of penance." They do not, however, regard the forgiveness, which the sacrament of penance conveys in regard to post-baptismal sins, as so perfect and complete as that which baptism conveys in regard to the sins which preceded it: for they teach that the sacrament of penance, while it takes away all the guilt of mortal sins, in so far as this would otherwise have exposed men to eternal punishment, leaves men still exposed to temporal punishment, properly so called, for their mortal sins, and to the guilt, such as it is, of their venial sins; and thus needs to be supplemented by satisfactions, rendered either by sinners themselves, or by others in their room, and either in this life or in purgatory. These doctrines are plainly taught in the twenty-ninth and thirtieth canons; and as there is no room for doubt as to what the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this point is, we need not at present further dwell upon it.

The same observation applies to the second topic, which might be comprehended under this general head of the *results* or *consequences* of justification,—viz., *this*, that the Church of Rome teaches that it is possible for men, when once justified, to keep in this life wholly and perfectly the law of God; nay, even to go beyond this, and to supererogate, and that they can truly and properly merit or deserve, with proper merit of condignity, increase of grace and eternal life. These doctrines, with the exception of that of works of supererogation,—which can be shown to be the doctrine of the church otherwise, though not so directly,—are taught clearly and unequivocally in the eighteenth, twenty-fourth, and thirty-second canons.

The last topic which it is needful to advert to, in order to complete the view of the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this important subject, is the certainty or assurance which believers

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\* Canon xxix.

have, or may have, or should have, of their being in a justified state, and of their persevering in it. This topic is explained in canons thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth. The Council of Trent taught that no man can have any certainty or assurance that he will persevere and attain to eternal life, without a special revelation; but this topic was not much discussed at the time of the Reformation, and it belongs more properly to the controversy between the Calvinists and the Arminians. The dispute between the Reformers and the Romanists in connection with this matter turned mainly upon this question, whether men could or should have any certainty or assurance that they were *at present* in a justified state, and would, of course, be saved if they persevered in it. And upon this point many of the most eminent orthodox Protestant divines have been of opinion that both the Reformers and the Council of Trent carried their respective views to an extreme, and that the truth lay somewhere between them. The Romanists, in their anxiety to deprive men of all means of attaining to anything like certainty or assurance that they were in a justified and safe condition, and thus to keep them entirely dependent upon the church, and wholly subject to her control, denied the possibility of certainty or assurance; while the Reformers, in general, maintained its necessity, and, in order, as it were, to secure it in the speediest and most effectual way, usually represented it as necessarily involved in the very nature of the first completed act of saving faith. The generality of orthodox Protestant divines in more modern times have maintained, in opposition to the Church of Rome, the possibility of attaining to a certainty or assurance of being in a justified and regenerated condition, and the duty of seeking and of having this certainty and assurance, as a privilege which God has provided for His people, and a privilege the possession of which is fitted to contribute greatly not only to their happiness, but to their holiness; while they have commonly so far deviated from the views entertained by many of the Reformers, as to deny its necessity, except in the sense of obligation, and more especially to represent it as not necessarily involved in the exercise of saving faith: and this is the view given of the matter in the standards of our church. But this is a topic of comparatively subordinate importance, as it does not essentially affect men's actual condition in God's sight, their relation to Him, or their everlasting destiny, but rather their present peace and comfort, and the advancement of the divine life in their souls.



There have thus been brought out many most important differences between the doctrines of the Church of Rome and those generally held by orthodox Protestants, on the meaning and nature, the ground and cause, the means and instrument, the results and consequences, of justification; and we must now proceed to give some explanation of the way in which the Reformers established their doctrines upon these subjects, and proved that those of the Church of Rome were inconsistent with the word of God, and dangerous to the souls of men.

*Sec. II.—Nature of Justification.*

We shall advert briefly to the grounds on which we maintain that justification is properly descriptive only of a change of state in men's judicial relation to God, and to His law, as including forgiveness and acceptance or admission to God's favour, in opposition to the Romish doctrine that it comprehends a change of character, the renovation of men's moral nature, or, as Papists commonly call it, the infusion of an inherent righteousness. Justification is God's act—it is He who justifies; and we must be guided wholly by the statements of His word in determining what the real nature of this act of His is. We must regard justification as just being what the word of God represents it to be; we must understand the word in the sense in which it is employed in the sacred Scriptures. The question then is, In what sense are the words justification and its cognates used in Scripture; and more especially, should any variety in its meaning and application be discovered there, in what sense is it employed in those passages in which it is manifest that the subject ordinarily expressed by it is most fully and formally explained? Now, the truth upon this point is so clear and certain in itself, and has been so generally admitted by all but Romanists, that it is unnecessary to occupy much time with the illustration of it.

It has been proved innumerable times, by evidence against which it is impossible to produce anything that has even plausibility, that the word justification is *generally* used in Scripture in what is called a forensic or judicial sense, as opposed to condemnation; that it means to reckon, or declare, or pronounce just or righteous, as if by passing a sentence to that effect; and that it does not include in its signification, as the Council of Trent asserts,

the making just or righteous, by effecting an actual change on the moral character and principles of men. The Council of Trent says that justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renovation of the inner man. But the inspired writers plainly do not ordinarily employ it to describe an actual change effected upon men's character, but only a change effected upon their legal state or condition by a forensic or judicial act of the Justifier. It implies the pronouncing, more or less formally, of a sentence,—a sentence, not of condemnation, but of acquittal or acceptance. It has been alleged that the original and radical idea of the word *δικαίωω* is to punish; and there are some considerations which favour this notion, though it cannot be said to be established by satisfactory evidence. But even if this were admitted to be the primary or radical idea expressed by the word, there would be no great difficulty in tracing the process by which it came to acquire what seems to be the nearly opposite meaning it bears in the New Testament. When a man has had a sentence of condemnation passed upon him for an offence, and has, in consequence, endured the punishment imposed, he is free from all further charge or liability, and might be said to be now justified in the derived sense of the word, or to have *now* virtually a sentence of acquittal pronounced upon him. A punished person in this way virtually becomes a justified one, and the two notions are thus not so alien or contradictory as they might at first sight appear to be. And it should not be forgotten that, in the matter of the justification of a sinner before God, there has been a punishment inflicted and endured, which is in every instance the ground or basis of the sinner's justification. When the apostle says, as he is represented in our translation,\* “He that is dead is free from sin,” the literal, real meaning of his statement is, “He that has died has been justified from sin,” *δεδικαίωται*; and the import of this declaration (which furnishes, I think, the key to the interpretation of the chapter), is, that a man by dying, and thereby enduring the punishment due to his sin (which sinners of course do in their Surety, whose death is imputed to them), has escaped from all further liability, and has a sentence virtually pronounced upon him, whereby he is justified from sin.

But whatever might be the primary meaning of the word

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\* Rom. vi. 7.

justify, and whatever the process of thought by which its meaning may have been afterward modified, it can be very easily and conclusively proved, that both in the Old and in the New Testament it is ordinarily employed in a forensic or judicial sense, and means not to make or render righteous by changing the character, but to reckon, declare, or pronounce righteous by a sentence formal or virtual, changing the state or condition in relation to a judge and a law. The Socinian system of justification is, in its general scope and tendency, very much akin to the Popish one; for both tend to assign to men themselves an influential and meritorious share in securing their own ultimate happiness; and yet even the Socinians admit that the word justify is used in the New Testament in a forensic sense, to denote the declaring or pronouncing men righteous. It is true that something else than a love of truth might lead them to concur with Protestants in the interpretation of this word; for the idea of God's *making* men righteous by effecting some change upon their character, or what the Romanists call the infusion of righteousness,—which they allege to be included in justification,—does not harmonize with the Socinian system, according to which men do not need to be *made* righteous, since they have always been so,—do not need to have righteousness infused into them, since they have never existed without it.

Almost the only man of eminence in modern times, beyond the pale of the Church of Rome, who has contended that the proper meaning of the word justify in Scripture is to make righteous,—*i.e.*, to sanctify,—is Grotius, whose inadequate sense of the importance of sound doctrine, and unscriptural and spurious love of peace, made him ever ready to sacrifice or compromise truth, whether it was to please Papists or Socinians.\* The course adopted upon this subject in Newman's Lectures on Justification is rather curious and instructive. Newman's general scheme of doctrine upon this subject, though it was published some years before he left the Church of England, and though Dr Pusey issued a pamphlet for the purpose of showing that there was nothing Popish about it, is beyond all reasonable doubt identical, in its fundamental principles and general tendencies, with that of the Council of Trent and the Church of Rome, to which its author has since formally submitted himself. The fact, however, that the articles of the church

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\* Grotius, Præf. ad Rom.

to which he then belonged (and which, at the time, he does not seem to have had any intention of leaving), had fixed the meaning of the word justify to be, to "account righteous before God," as well as perhaps some sense of the scriptural evidence in support of this view of its meaning, prevented him from openly adopting the definition which the Council of Trent gave of justification; and obliged him to admit that the proper meaning of the word in Scripture is to declare or pronounce, and not to make or render, righteous. He feels, however, that this admission exposes him to some disadvantage and difficulty in the exposition and defence of his Popish system; and he is, besides, greatly distressed at finding himself in the awkward position, to use his own words,\* of venturing "to prefer Luther in any matter even of detail to St Austin," the former of whom, he says, was merely the founder of a school, or sect, while the latter was a father in the Holy Apostolic Church;† and on these accounts he is obliged to devise some expedient for practically and in substance withdrawing the concession he had been compelled to make; and it is this:‡ "To justify, means in itself "counting righteous," but includes *under* its meaning "making righteous:" in other words, the sense of the *term* is "counting righteous;" and the sense of the *thing* denoted by it is, making righteous. In the abstract, it is a counting righteous; in the concrete, a making righteous." These words may probably be regarded as not very intelligible, but the general object or tendency of them is plain enough; and it is met and exposed simply by recollecting that Scripture, being given by inspiration, and therefore a higher authority than even the unanimous consent of the fathers, just means what it says, and that by the terms which it employs it conveys to us accurate conceptions of the things denoted by them. The course pursued by Newman in this matter is fitted to impress upon us at once the difficulty, and the importance, *for Popish purposes*, of evading the clear scriptural evidence of the forensic sense of the word—justify.

But it is unnecessary to adduce in detail the scriptural evidence in support of the Protestant meaning of the word—justify. I may briefly advert, however, to the way in which Popish writers have attempted to meet it. They do not deny that the word is

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\* Newman's Lectures on Justification, p. 70. 2d edition.

† Ibid., p. 67.

‡ Ibid., p. 71.



sometimes, nay often, taken in Scripture in a forensic sense. Its meaning is too clearly and conclusively fixed by the context in some passages, especially in those in which it is formally opposed to the word *condemn*, to admit this position. But they usually contend that this is not the only meaning which the word bears in the Scriptures,—that there are cases in which it means to make righteous,—and that, consequently, they are entitled to regard this idea as contained in its full scriptural import. Now, it is to be observed that the position which Protestants maintain upon this subject is not, that in *every* passage where the word occurs there exists evidence by which it can be proved from that passage alone, taken by itself, that the word there is used in a forensic sense, and cannot admit of any other. They concede that there are passages where the word occurs in which there is nothing in the passage itself, or in the context, to fix down its meaning to the sense of counting righteous, in preference to making righteous. Their position is this,—that there are many passages where it is plain that it *must* be taken in a forensic sense, and cannot admit of any other; *and* that there are none, or at least none in which the justification of a sinner before God is formally and explicitly spoken of, in which it can be proved that the forensic sense is inadmissible or necessarily excluded, and that it must be taken in the sense of making righteous. If these positions are true, then the Protestant view of the Scripture meaning and import of justification is established; for we are of course entitled to apply to those passages in which the sense of the word is not fixed by that particular passage, the meaning which it *must* bear in many passages, and which cannot be shown to be certainly inadmissible in any one. This being the true state of the argument, Romanists, in order to make out their case, are bound to produce passages in which it can be shown that the word *cannot* be taken in a forensic sense, and *must* be regarded as meaning to make righteous. And this, accordingly, they undertake; usually, however, endeavouring in the first place to involve the subject in obscurity, by trying to show that there are various senses,—four at least,—in which the word justify is used in Scripture. The Romanists, of course, in this discussion are fully entitled to choose their own ground, and to select their own texts, in which they think they can prove that the forensic sense is inadmissible or necessarily excluded, and that of making righteous is required; while all that Protestants have



to do is merely to prove that the Romanists have not succeeded in conclusively establishing these positions.

The texts usually selected by Romanists for this purpose are the following: \*—"Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also *justified*; and whom He justified, them He also glorified,"—where, as there is no explicit mention of regeneration or sanctification in this description of the leading steps of the process of the salvation of sinners, it is contended that *this* must be comprehended in the word justify, which seems to fill up the whole intermediate space between calling and glorifying. Again: † "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God,"—where the general scope of the passage, and the position of the word justified, it is alleged, show that at least it is not taken in a forensic sense. Again, ‡ the apostle speaks of the "renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Again: § "He that is righteous, let him be righteous still,"—the original of which in the "textus receptus," as it is called, is *καὶ ὁ δίκαιος δικαιωθήτω ἔτι*. Now, some Protestant writers have admitted that in these passages, or in some of them, the forensic use of the word *δικαιω* can be *disproved*; and Le Blanc, in the work which I formerly referred to, || and described, has produced all the concessions of this kind which he could discover, and has laboured himself to prove that these concessions could not have been fairly withheld, and cannot be refused without a very forced and unwarrantable construction of the passages. Those Protestant divines who have been disposed to admit that in these passages, or in some of them, it can be shown that the word justify is not used in a forensic sense, usually contend that it is quite sufficient, in order to establish the Protestant doctrine, and to overthrow the Popish one, about the meaning of justification, to show that the forensic sense is that in which it is generally and ordinarily taken in Scripture, and that it is taken in *that* sense, and in no other, in those passages

\* Rom. viii. 30.

† 1 Cor. vi. 11.

‡ Titus iii. 5, 6, 7.

§ Rev. xxii. 11.

|| Theses Theologicæ Sedanenses. De usu et acceptione vocis Justificandi in Scripturis et Scholis, pp. 255-63.

where the subject of the justification of a sinner before God is most fully and formally set forth. There is force in this view of the matter; and if these positions can be established, as they certainly can, this is sufficient to show that it is unwarrantable to introduce into the scriptural description of what the justification of a sinner is, any other idea than that of a change of state in relation to God and to His law, even though one or two instances may occur in the Scriptures in which the word is used in a somewhat wider and larger sense. This consideration is sufficient to save Protestant commentators from any very strong temptation to pervert these passages from what may seem to be their true meaning, in order to wrest a weapon out of the hands of an opponent; and I use the word temptation here, because it should never be forgotten that the highest and most imperative duty of all honest investigators of Christian truth, is just to ascertain the true and real meaning of every portion of the inspired word of God. I cannot enter into a minute and detailed examination of those passages, and will make only one or two observations regarding them.

It will scarcely be disputed that, had these been the only passages in the New Testament where the word *justify* occurred, the presumption would have been against it being taken in a forensic sense,—to describe a change of legal relation, the passing of a sentence of acquittal. But, from the explanation we have given of the conditions of the argument, it will be seen that much more than this must be proved in regard to them, in order to their being of any service to the Papists,—even that the forensic sense is clearly and conclusively shut out. Now, I think it has been satisfactorily proved that this cannot be effected, and that, on the contrary, in regard to all the passages quoted,—except, perhaps, the one which occurs in the twenty-second chapter of the Revelation,—it can be shown, and without any violent and unwarrantable straining of the statements, that the ordinary and usual sense of the word in the New Testament is not clearly and necessarily excluded. In regard to the first of them,—that occurring in the eighth of the Romans,—it is contended that we have no right to assume, as the Popish argument does, that the apostle must necessarily have comprehended, in the description he gave, *every* step in the process of a sinner's salvation, every one of the leading blessings which God bestows; that the train of thought which the apostle was pursuing at the time,—or, what is in substance the

same thing, the context and scope of the passage,—did not require this, as Calvin has shown in his commentary upon it; and that even if we were to assume,—what, however, is not necessary, and is therefore, from the conditions of the argument, unwarrantable,—that all the leading blessings of salvation must have been directly or by implication adverted to, we are under no more necessity of supposing that regeneration, by which men are made righteous, must be included under justification, than under vocation or glorification.

There is no serious difficulty in the passage quoted from the sixth of First Corinthians. Justify cannot here mean to make righteous,—*i.e.*, it cannot be identical with, or comprehensive of, regeneration and sanctification; for it is distinguished from them, while they are expressly mentioned. And as to the allegation that it cannot be here understood in a forensic sense, because it is introduced after “washed and sanctified,” and is ascribed to the operation of the Holy Spirit, it is answered, that the inspired writers do not always, in other cases, restrict themselves to what may be called the natural order of time,—that the apostle’s train of thought in the preceding context naturally led him to give prominence and precedency to washing and sanctification; while he was also naturally led on, in magnifying their deliverance and in enforcing their obligations, to introduce, as completing the description of what had been done for them, their justification, or deliverance from guilt and condemnation; and that justification as well as sanctification may be, and is, ascribed to the Holy Spirit as well as to Christ, since it is He who works faith in them and thereby unites them to Christ, which union is the origin and the ground of all the blessings they enjoy.

The argument which the Romanists found on the third chapter of Titus amounts in substance to this: that the statement seems to imply that men are renewed by the Holy Ghost, in order that they may be justified by grace; but it has been proved, first, that neither the connection of the particular clauses of the sentence, nor the general scope of the passage, requires us to admit that the apostle intended to convey this idea; and, secondly, that, independently of all questions as to the exact philological meaning of the word justify, this doctrine is inconsistent with the plain teaching of the word of God in regard to the whole subject. I think it has been established, by such considerations as these,

that in none of these three passages is there any necessity for regarding the word—justify—as meaning or including to make righteous, or for departing in the interpretation of them from its ordinary forensic sense.

The only one remaining, is that in the twenty-second chapter of Revelation, “He that is righteous, let him be righteous still.” Now, there does seem to be greater difficulty about this one; for the only senses which, in accordance with the context, and without considerable straining, the word *δικαιωθήτω* seems here to admit, are either, “Let him be made righteous,”—*i.e.*, more righteous,—or, “Let him do righteousness,—*i.e.*, more righteousness. But, by a remarkable coincidence, it so happens that there is good and conclusive ground, on the soundest and most universally recognised principles of criticism, for believing that the reading in the “textus receptus” is erroneous; that the word *δικαίωω* was not here used by the apostle; that *δικαιωθήτω* ought to be removed from the text, and the words *δικαιοσύνην ποιησάτω*, literally expressing the second of the two meanings above mentioned, as apparently required by the context, substituted in its room. Griesbach, Scholz, Lachmann, and Tischendorf,—*i.e.*, all the most recent and most eminent investigators into the sacred text,—have done this without any hesitation; and the purely critical grounds on which this change is based, have commended themselves to the minds of all competent judges. I cannot prosecute this subject further; but what appear to me to be satisfactory discussions of these texts, as adduced by Le Blanc and the Romanists, may be found in Dr Owen’s great work on Justification,\* in Witsius’ Economy of the Covenants,† and De Moor’s Commentary on Marckius.‡ Witsius, in reference to the concessions which some Protestant divines had made to Romanists about the meaning of the word justify in some of these passages, says: “Et sane non exagitanda hæc maximorum virorum ingenuitas est, qui licet tantum adversariis dederint, feliciter tamen de iis in summâ rei triumpharunt. Verum enimvero nos rationes sufficientes non videmus, quæ ipsos tam liberales esse coegerint. Nulla vis allegatis inferretur locis, si ibi quoque justificandi verbum, sensu, qui Paulo ordinarius est, acciperetur; neque minus commode omnia tunc fluere videntur.”§

\* C. iv.

† Lib. iii., c. viii.

‡ C. xxiv., tom. iv.

§ Wits., Econom. Fœd., Lib. iii. cap. viii., sec. vii.



The word *justify*, then, in its scriptural use, means to reckon, or pronounce, or declare righteous, or to resolve on treating as righteous; and the justification of a sinner, therefore, is descriptive of a change effected by an act of God, not upon his moral character, but upon his state or condition in relation to the law under which he was placed, and to God, the author and the guardian of that law,—a change whereby he who is the object of it ceases to be held or reckoned and treated as guilty, and liable to punishment,—has a sentence of acquittal and approbation pronounced upon him,—is forgiven all his past offences, and is admitted into the enjoyment of God's favour and friendship. God has, indeed,—as is clearly set forth in His word, and as the Reformers fully admitted,—made complete and effectual provision that every sinner whom He pardons and accepts shall also be born again, and renewed in the whole man after His own image; but He does not describe to us this change upon men's moral character by the name of justification. He assigns to this other equally indispensable change a different name or designation; and although,—according to the fundamental principles of the scheme which He has devised for the salvation of sinners, which He has fully revealed to us in His word, and which He is executing by His Spirit and in His providence,—there has been established and secured an invariable connection in fact between these two great blessings which He bestows,—these two great changes which He effects,—yet, by the representations which He has given us of them in His word, He has imposed upon us an obligation to distinguish between them, to beware of confounding them, and to investigate distinctly and separately all that we find revealed regarding them in the sacred Scriptures. If this be so, the first and most obvious inference to be deduced from it is, that the Council of Trent and the Church of Rome have erred, have corrupted and perverted the truth of God, in defining justification to be not only the remission of sin, but also the renovation of the inner man; and thus confounding it with, or unwarrantably extending it so as to include, regeneration and sanctification, or the infusion of an inherent personal righteousness. Every error in the things of God is sinful and dangerous, and tends to extend and propagate itself; and while thus darkening men's understandings, it tends also to endanger, or to affect injuriously, their spiritual welfare. An error as to the scriptural meaning and



import of justification,—and especially an error which thus confounds, or mixes up together, the two great blessings of the gospel,—must tend to introduce obscurity and confusion into men's whole conceptions of the method of salvation.

It is true that even Augustine, notwithstanding all his profound knowledge of divine truth, and the invaluable services which he was made the instrument of rendering to the cause of sound doctrine and of pure Christian theology, does not seem to have ever attained to distinct apprehensions of the forensic meaning of justification, and usually speaks of it as including or comprehending regeneration; and this was probably owing, in some measure, to his want of familiarity with the Greek language, to his reading the New Testament in Latin, and being thus somewhat led astray by the etymological meaning of the word *justification*. The subject of justification, in the scriptural and Protestant sense of it, had not been discussed in the church, or occupied much of its attention, since the time of the Apostle Paul. The whole tendency of the course of sentiment which had prevailed in the church from the apostolic age to that of Augustine, was to lead men to throw the doctrine of justification into the background, and to regard it as of inferior importance. When Pelagius, and his immediate followers, assailed the doctrines of grace, it was exclusively in the way of ascribing to men themselves the power or capacity to do God's will and to obey His law, and to effect whatever changes might be necessary in order to enable them to accomplish this. And to this point, accordingly, the attention of Augustine was chiefly directed; while the subject of justification remained in a great measure neglected. But from the general soundness of his views and feelings in regard to divine things, and his profound sense of the necessity of referring everything bearing upon the salvation of sinners to the grace of God and the work of Christ, his defective and erroneous views about the meaning and import of the word *justification* did not exert so injurious an influence as might have been expected, either upon his theological system or upon his character; and assumed practically very much the aspect of a mere philological blunder, or of an error in phraseology, rather than in real sentiment or conviction. And Calvin, accordingly, refers to it in the following terms: *Ac ne Augustini quidem sententia vel saltem loquendi ratio per omnia recipienda est. Tumetsi enim egregie hominem omni justitiæ laude spoliât, ac*

*totam Dei gratiæ transcribit: gratiam tamen ad sanctificationem refert, quâ in vitæ novitatem per Spiritum regeneramur.*"\* The whole tendency on the part of the great body of the church for about a thousand years after Augustine, notwithstanding all the respect that was professedly entertained for him, was to throw all that was sacred and scriptural in his system of doctrine into the background, and to bring all that was defective and erroneous in his opinions into prominence and influence; and hence there is this singular aspect presented by the decrees of the Council of Trent, that while it might probably be difficult to prove that they contain much, if anything, which formally, and *in terminis*, contradicts any of the leading doctrines of Augustine, they yet exhibit to us a system of theology which, in its whole bearing, spirit, and tendency, is opposed to that which pervaded the mind and the writings of that great man, and which much more nearly approximates in these respects to that of his opponents in the Pelagian controversy.

But while this much may be justly said in defence of by far the greatest and most useful man whom God gave to the church from the apostolic age till the Reformation, it should not be forgotten that his defective and erroneous views upon the subject of justification were at once the effect and the cause of the attention of the church being withdrawn, through the artifices of Satan, from a careful study of what Scripture teaches as to the nature and necessity of forgiveness and acceptance, and the way and manner in which men individually receive and become possessed of them; and of men being thus led to form most inadequate impressions of what is implied in their being all guilty and under the curse of the law as transgressors, and of the indispensable necessity of their being washed from their sins in the blood of Christ. The natural tendency of men is to consider the guilt incurred by the violation of God's law as a trivial matter, which may be adjusted without any great difficulty; and this tendency is strengthened by vague and erroneous impressions about the character of God, and the principles that regulate His government of the world. And where something about Christianity is known,

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\* Calv. Inst., Lib. iii., c. xi., sec. 15. Bellarmine, in quoting this passage, as a concession of Calvin, that all the fathers, even Augustine, were opposed to him on this point, omits

all the words that are in italics, and gives the first and the last clauses as the whole passage. De Justificat. Lib. ii., cap. viii.

this universal and most dangerous tendency appears in the form of leading men to cherish, and to act upon, a vague impression that, because Christ came into the world to save us from our sins, men need have no great anxiety about any guilt that may attach to them, even while they have not a single distinct and definite conception about the way in which Christ's mediatorial work bears upon the deliverance and salvation of the human race, or of the way in which men individually become possessed of forgiveness and acceptance.

I have no doubt that it is to be regarded as an indication and result of this state of mind and feeling, that there has been so strong and general a tendency to extend, beyond what Scripture warrants, the meaning of justification, and to mix it up with regeneration and sanctification. Romish writers, in defending the doctrine of their church upon this subject, sometimes talk as if they thought that deliverance from guilt and condemnation,—mere forgiveness and acceptance,—were scarcely important enough to exhaust the meaning of the scriptural statements about justification, or to be held up as constituting a great and distinct blessing, which ought to be by itself a subject of diligent investigation to the understanding, and of deep anxiety to the heart. All false conceptions of the system of Christian doctrine assume, or are based upon, inadequate and erroneous views and impressions of the nature and effects of the fall,—of the sinfulness of the state into which man fell; producing, of course, equally inadequate and erroneous views and impressions of the difficulty of effecting their deliverance, and of the magnitude, value, and efficacy of the provision made for accomplishing it. Forgiveness and regeneration, even when admitted to be in some sense necessary, are represented as comparatively trivial matters, which may be easily procured or effected,—the precise grounds of which need not be very carefully or anxiously investigated, since there is no difficulty in regarding them as, in a manner, the natural results of the mercy of God, or, as is often added, though without any definite meaning being attached to it, of the work of Christ. This appears most fully and palpably in the Socinian system, which is just a plain denial of all that is most peculiar and important in the Christian revelation, and in the scheme there unfolded for the salvation of sinners. But it appears to a considerable extent also in the Popish system, where, though the bearing of the vicarious work of Christ upon the forgiveness and renovation of men is not denied, it is thrown very much into

the background, and left in a state of great indefiniteness and obscurity; and in which the importance of forgiveness and admission into God's favour, as a great and indispensable blessing, is overlooked and underrated, by being mixed up with renovation and sanctification,—men's thoughts being thus withdrawn from the due contemplation of the great truth that they need forgiveness and acceptance, and from the investigation, under a due sense of responsibility, of the way and manner in which they are to receive or obtain it.

There are few things more important, either with reference to the production of a right state of mind and feeling in regard to our religious interests, or to the formation of a right system of theology, than that men should be duly impressed with the conviction that they are by nature guilty, subject to the curse of a broken law, condemned by a sentence of God, and standing as already condemned criminals at this tribunal. If this be indeed the real condition of men by nature, it is of the last importance, both as to the formation of their opinions and the regulation of their feelings and conduct, that they should be aware of it; and that they should realize distinctly and definitely all that is involved in it. When this is understood and realized, men can scarcely fail to be impressed with the conviction, that the first and most essential thing in order to their deliverance and welfare is, that this sentence which hangs over them be cancelled, and that a sentence of an opposite import be either formally or virtually pronounced upon them,—a sentence whereby God forgives their sins and admits them into the enjoyment of His favour, or in which He intimates His purpose and intention no longer to hold them liable for their transgressions, or to treat them as transgressors, but to regard and treat them as if they had not transgressed; and not only to abstain from punishing them, but to admit them into the enjoyment of His favour. The passing of such an act, or the pronouncing of such a sentence, on God's part, is evidently the first and most indispensable thing for men's deliverance and welfare. Men can be expected to form a right estimate of the grounds on which such an act can be passed,—such a change can be effected upon their condition and prospects,—only when they begin with realizing their actual state by nature, as guilty and condemned criminals, standing at God's tribunal, and utterly unable to render any satisfaction for their offences, or to merit anything whatever at God's hand.



*Sec. III.—Imputation of Christ's Righteousness.*

Whatever meaning might be attached to the word *justification* in Scripture, and even though it could be proved that, as used there, it comprehended or described both a change in men's state and in men's character, it would still be an important question, deserving of a separate and very careful investigation, What are the grounds or reasons on account of which God forgives any man's sins, and admits him into the enjoyment of His favour? And it would still be an imperative duty, incumbent upon all men, to examine with the utmost care into everything which Scripture contains, fitted to throw any light upon this infinitely important subject. Now, I have already shown that, while the Council of Trent ascribes, in general, the forgiveness and acceptance of sinners to the vicarious work of Christ as its meritorious cause, in the first place it gives no explanation of the way and manner in which the work of Christ bears upon the accomplishment of this result in the case of individuals; and then, in the second place, it represents the only formal cause of our forgiveness to be an inherent personal righteousness, infused into men by God's Spirit,—thus teaching that *that* to which God has a respect or regard in passing an act of forgiveness in the case of any individual, is a personal righteousness, previously bestowed upon him, and wrought in him; while the only place or share assigned, or rather left, to the work of Christ in the matter, is to merit, procure, or purchase the grace, or gracious exercise of power, by which this inherent personal righteousness is infused.

The Reformers and the Reformed confessions, on the other hand, asserted that *that* to which God has directly and immediately a respect in forgiving any man's sins, or that which is the proper cause or ground of the act of forgiveness and acceptance, is not an inherent personal righteousness infused into him, but the righteousness of Christ imputed to him. By the righteousness of Christ, the Reformers understood the whole vicarious work of Christ, including both His sufferings as satisfactory to the divine justice and law, which required that men's sins should be punished, and His whole obedience to the law, as meritorious of the life that was promised to obedience; the former being usually called by later divines, when these subjects came to be discussed with greater minuteness and detail, his *passive*, and the latter his *active*,



righteousness. By this righteousness being imputed to any man, they meant that it was reckoned to him, or put down to his account, so that God, from a regard to it thus imputed, virtually agreed or resolved to deal with him, or to treat him, as if he himself had suffered what Christ suffered, and had done what Christ did; and had thus fully satisfied for his offences, and fully earned the rewards promised to perfect obedience. The Reformers taught that, when God pardoned and accepted any sinner, the ground or basis of the divine act,—*that* to which God had directly and immediately a respect or regard in performing it, or in passing a virtual sentence cancelling that man's sins, and admitting him into the enjoyment of His favour,—was this, that the righteousness of Christ was his, *through his union to Christ*; that being his in this way, it was in consequence imputed to him, or put down to his account, just as if it were truly and properly his own; and that this righteousness, being in itself fully satisfactory and meritorious, formed an adequate ground on which his sins might be forgiven and his person accepted. Now, the Papists deny that, in this sense, the righteousness of Christ, as satisfactory and meritorious, is imputed to men as the ground or basis of God's act in forgiving and accepting them; and set up in opposition to it, as occupying this place, and serving this purpose, an inherent personal righteousness infused into them. And in this way the state of the question, as usually discussed between Protestant and Romish writers, is, as we formerly explained and proved, clearly defined and marked out, although the decisions of the Council of Trent upon this subject are involved in some obscurity.

The main grounds on which the Reformers contended that the righteousness of Christ, imputed to a man, or given to him in virtue of his union to Christ, and then held and reckoned as his, was that to which God had respect in forgiving him, and admitting him to the enjoyment of His favour, were these: First, that, according to the general principles indicated in the sacred Scriptures as regulating God's dealings with fallen man, a *full satisfaction and a perfect righteousness* were necessary as the ground or basis of an act of forgiveness and acceptance; and that there is no adequate satisfaction and no perfect righteousness which can avail for this result except the sacrifice and righteousness of Christ; and, secondly, that the statements contained in Scripture as to the place which Christ and His vicarious work, including His obedience

as well as His sufferings, hold in their bearing upon the forgiveness and acceptance of sinners, necessarily imply this doctrine; and that, indeed, the substance of these statements cannot be correctly, fully, and definitely brought out, or embodied in distinct and explicit propositions, *except just by asserting* that Christ's righteousness is given and imputed to men, and is *thus* the ground or basis on which God's act in forgiving and accepting them rests.

It is manifest that the doctrine of Christ being the surety and substitute of sinners, and performing in that capacity a vicarious work, implies that it was necessary that something should be suffered and done by Him which might stand in the room and stead of what should have been suffered and done by them; and that *in this way* they, for whose salvation it was designed, have the benefit of what He suffered and did in their room imparted to them. This, accordingly, is admitted to be in substance what the Scripture states as to the ground or basis of *forgiveness* by all, even Arminians, who admit a proper vicarious atonement or satisfaction; and they thus admit, though some of them make great difficulties about the language or phraseology, the whole substance of what is contended for under the name of the imputation of our sins to Christ as the ground of His sufferings, and of the imputation of Christ's sufferings to us as the ground or basis of our pardon. Now, the Reformers, and Calvinistic divines in general, have extended the same general principle to merit and acceptance, which is admitted by all but Socinians to apply to the two other correlatives, viz., satisfaction and forgiveness. The proper grounds on which a criminal, who had violated a law, and had had a sentence of condemnation pronounced upon him, is exempted from liability to punishment, are either his having already endured in his own person the full punishment appointed, or his having imputed to him, and so getting the benefit of, a full satisfaction made by another in his room; for I assume, at present, the necessity of a satisfaction or atonement,—a principle which, of course, precludes any other supposition than the two now stated. But a man might, on one or other of these two grounds, be pardoned or forgiven, so as to be no longer liable to any further punishment, while yet there was no ground or reason whatever why he should be admitted into the favour or friendship of the judge or law-giver,—receive from him any token of kindness, or be placed by him in a position of honour and comfort. We find, however, in

Scripture, that, in the case of all justified men, these two things are, in point of fact, invariably and inseparably combined; and that when God justifies a man, He not only pardons all his sins, but admits him into the enjoyment of His favour, and virtually pronounces upon him a sentence whereby He gives him a right or title to happiness and heaven, and to everything necessary for the full and permanent enjoyment of them.

The two things, however, though invariably combined, in fact, in the gospel method of salvation, and in all on whom it takes practical effect, are quite distinct in themselves, and easily separable in idea; nay, they are so entirely distinct in their own nature, that we cannot but conceive that each must have its own suitable and appropriate ground to rest upon. As the proper ground of an act of forgiveness or of immunity from further punishment, extended to a condemned criminal, in a case where there are principles that preclude a mere discretionary pardon by a sovereign act of clemency, must be the endurance of the penalty prescribed, either personal or by a vicarious satisfaction, so the proper ground of a sentence of approbation and reward must, from the nature of the case, be obedience to the law, personal or vicarious, *i.e.*, imputed. If a regard to the honour of the law demanded, in the case of sinners, that there should be satisfaction as the ground of forgiveness, because it had threatened transgression with death, so it equally demanded that there should be perfect obedience as the ground or basis of admission to life. Perfect obedience to the law,—or, what is virtually the same thing, merit the result of perfect obedience,—seems just as necessary as the ground or basis of a virtual sentence of approbation and reward, as satisfaction is as the ground or basis of a sentence of forgiveness and immunity from further punishment. And as there is no perfect righteousness in men themselves to be the ground or basis of their being accepted or admitted to favour and happiness,—as they can no more render perfect obedience than they can satisfy for their sins,—Christ's perfect obedience must become theirs, and be made available for their benefit, as well as His suffering,—His merit as well as His satisfaction.

Papists unite with Arminians in denying the necessity of a perfect righteousness, as the ground or basis of God's act in accepting men's persons, and giving them a right and title to heaven; and in maintaining that all that is implied in the justifi-

cation of a sinner, so far as it is descriptive of a mere change of state, consists only in forgiveness, based upon Christ's vicarious sufferings or penal satisfaction. The Arminians hold the doctrine of the imputation of faith for, or instead of, righteousness or perfect obedience; and the chief scriptural ground on which they defend this doctrine is the statement of the apostle,\* that "faith is counted or reckoned for righteousness,"—*πίστις λογίζεται εἰς δικαιοσύνην*. Their interpretation of this statement certainly could not be easily rejected, if the preposition *εἰς* could be shown to convey anything like the idea of substitution, as the word *for*, by which it is rendered in our version, often does. But no such idea can be legitimately extracted from it. The prepositions used in Scripture in reference to Christ's vicarious atonement or satisfaction in our room and stead, for us,—for our sins,—are, *αντι* and *ὑπερ*, and never *εἰς*, which means towards, in order to, with a view to,—ideas which, in some connections, may be correctly enough expressed by the English word *for*, but which cannot convey the idea of substitution. Faith being counted *εἰς δικαιοσύνην*, means merely,—and cannot, according to the established *usus loquendi*, mean anything else than,—faith being counted in order to righteousness, or with a view to justification; so that this statement of the apostle does not directly inform us how, or in what way, it is that the imputation of faith bears upon the result of justification,—this we must learn from other scriptural statements,—and most certainly does not indicate that it bears upon this result by being, or by being regarded and accepted as, a substitute for righteousness or perfect obedience.

The Arminians commonly teach that faith,—and the sincere though imperfect obedience, or personal righteousness, as they call it, which faith produces,—is counted or accepted by God as if it were perfect obedience, and in this way avails to our justification, and more especially, of course, from the nature of the case, to our acceptance and title to heaven. Now, with respect to this doctrine, I think it is no very difficult matter to show,—though I cannot at present enter upon the proof,—first, that it is not supported by any scriptural evidence; secondly, that it has been devised as an interpretation of certain scriptural statements which have some appearance of countenancing it,—an interpretation that might supersede the common Calvinistic explanation of

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\* Rom. iv. 5, 9.



them, and might not contradict the general Arminian doctrine upon the subject of justification; and, thirdly, that it implies a virtual admission, or indicates a sort of lurking consciousness, of the scriptural truth of some general principles which really establish the Calvinistic, and overturn the Arminian, doctrine on the subject of justification,—viz., a distinction, in nature and ground, between forgiveness and acceptance; and the necessity, after all, of a perfect righteousness, actual or by imputation, as the ground or cause of acceptance and admission into the enjoyment of God's favour. These two important principles the Arminians formally and explicitly deny, and the denial of them constitutes the main ground of controversy between them and the Calvinists in this whole question. And yet their doctrine of the imputation of faith for, or instead of, righteousness, implies something tantamount to a virtual admission of both. They do not allege that this imputation of faith for righteousness is the ground of the pardon of our sins, for that they admit to be the vicarious sufferings of Christ. If it bears, therefore, upon our justification at all, it can be only, from the nature of the case, upon our acceptance and admission into God's favour; and if faith, and the imperfect obedience which follows from it, is regarded and accepted in the way of imputation instead of righteousness, this can be only because a higher and more perfect righteousness than is, in fact, found in men, *is in some way or other necessary*,—needful to be brought in,—in the adjustment of this matter, with a view to men's eternal welfare. But though all this can be shown to be fairly implied in their doctrine of the imputation of faith instead of righteousness, they continue explicitly to deny the necessity of a real or actual perfect righteousness as the ground or basis of acceptance and a title to heaven, lest the admission of this should constrain them to adopt the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness.

Papists have another way of making this argument about the necessity of a perfect righteousness, in the use of which the Arminians have not ventured to follow them, and which even the Socinians hesitate to adopt. It is by asserting that, even if it be conceded that a perfect righteousness is necessary, there is no occasion to have recourse to Christ's righteousness; for that men's own inherent personal righteousness is, or may be, perfect. Bellarmine distinctly lays down and maintains this doctrine, in opposition to the common Protestant argument for the necessity



of the imputation of Christ's righteousness, from there being no other that is perfect. He says that our inherent righteousness consists chiefly in faith, hope, and love, which Papists commonly call the theological virtues; he then proceeds to prove from Scripture that all these virtues may be perfect in men in this life, and thus constitute them perfectly righteous. His argument, indeed, plainly requires him to prove that these virtues are actually, and in point of fact, perfect in man in this life. This, however, he scarcely ventures to attempt, and merely labours to prove from Scripture that they *may be* perfect, or that perfection in them may possibly be attained; and after having established this to his own satisfaction,\* he triumphantly concludes, "Quod si fidem, spem, et caritatem, ac per hoc justitiam inherentem, *perfectam* habere possumus, frustra laborant hæretici in asserenda imputatione justitiæ, quasi alioqui nullo modo simpliciter, et absolute justii esse possimus."† The employment of such an argument as this brings out very clearly,—more so than their cautious and guarded general statements,—the real doctrine of the Church of Rome in regard to the ground of a sinner's justification; while, at the same time, from its manifest contrariety to the plainest scriptural declarations, it is not necessary to enlarge in refuting it.

It must, however, be acknowledged that the great direct and proper proof of the Protestant doctrine of the righteousness of Christ, given and imputed, being *that* to which God has a respect or regard in justifying a sinner, is the second position which we laid down,—viz., that the scriptural statements about Christ as the only Saviour of sinners, and about the bearing of His sufferings and obedience upon their deliverance and salvation, imply this, and indeed can be embodied in distinct and definite propositions only by asserting this, doctrine. As the Scriptures indicate that a perfect righteousness is necessary, as the ground or basis of our acceptance and admission to a right to life, as well as a full satisfaction as the ground or basis of our forgiveness or exemption from punishment, so they set before us such a perfect righteousness as available for us, and actually benefiting us, in the obedience which Christ, as our surety, rendered to all the requirements of the law. The apostle assures us‡ that "God sent forth His Son,

\* Davenant. Prælectiones de Justitia Habituali et Actuali, c. 24, pp. 325-329: Allport's translation, vol. i., p. 181.

† Bellarm., De Justificat., Lib. ii., c. vii.

‡ Gal. iv. 4. 5.

made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons;" where our translation unwarrantably, by changing the construction,—giving in the one case "to redeem," and in the other, "that we might receive," while both are expressed in the original by the same word *ἵνα*,—conceals the fact that the apostle plainly declared that Christ was made under the law, and of course complied with all its requirements, both as demanding punishment, and as imposing perfect obedience, in order thereby to effect two distinct objects,—viz., that He might deliver us from its curse, and that He might invest us with the privileges of sons.\* It makes no material difference whether we suppose that both the clauses introduced with *ἵνα* hold directly of, or are immediately connected in grammatical regimen with, Christ's being made under the law,—or that the latter clause, "might receive," holds directly of the preceding one,—viz., that "He might redeem us;"—for there is nothing inconsistent with the teaching of the Scripture, in regarding the blessing of forgiveness as being in some sense, in the order of nature, though not of time, antecedent and preparatory to that of acceptance, or the bestowal of a right to life and all the privileges of sonship.

The Scriptures represent the deliverance and salvation of men, and all the blessings which these require or imply, as traceable not only to Christ's sufferings and death,—*i.e.*, to His penal satisfaction,—but generally to Christ, and to His whole work as our surety; while they also represent all that He did in our nature upon earth as vicarious,—as performed in the capacity of a surety or substitute, acting in the room and stead of others. They also more directly represent Him as our righteousness,—as made of God unto us righteousness,—and as making many righteous by His obedience; statements which, in their fair and natural import, imply that His obedience, as well as His sufferings, bear directly and immediately upon our reception into the enjoyment of the divine favour, and our participation in the blessings of redemption. And if His whole obedience to the law thus bears directly and immediately upon our enjoyment of the blessings of salvation, it can be only by its being held or reckoned as performed in our

\* The original is, "ἕξαπίστειλεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν Υἱὸν αὐτοῦ, γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικὸς, γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμου." Ἴνα τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον ἕξαγοράσῃ, ἵνα τὴν υἰοθεσίαν ἀπολάβωμεν." *Walæi Loci Communes*, "De Satisfactione," Opera, tom. i., p. 398. Lugd. Bat. 1647.

room,—by its being imputed to us, or put down to our account, so as thereby actually to avail for our benefit.

We can form no distinct or definite conception either of the satisfaction or the meritorious obedience of Christ, acting or operating directly upon our forgiveness and acceptance with God, *except in this way*. We must bring to bear upon them the Scripture ideas both of substitution and imputation; and when we do so, we can form an intelligible and distinct conception of that which the scriptural statements upon the subject seem so plainly to indicate; while, without the introduction and application of these scriptural ideas of substitution and imputation, the whole subject is dark, obscure, and impalpable. We can give no distinct or intelligible statement or explanation of how either the satisfaction or the meritorious obedience of Christ bear upon, and affect, the forgiveness and the acceptance of sinners, except by saying that they were rendered in the room and stead of men, and that they are applied to, and made available for, those in whose room they were rendered, by being made over to them, and put down to their account, so that they in consequence are regarded and treated as if they had endured and done them themselves. This is what is obviously suggested by the general tenor of Scripture language upon the subject; and it is only in this way that we can clearly and definitely *express* the substance of what an examination of Scripture statements forces upon our minds as the actual reality of the case.

Romanists, accordingly, while professedly arguing against the imputation of Christ's righteousness for the justification of sinners, have felt themselves constrained to make concessions, which involve the whole substance of what Protestants contend for in this matter. Bellarmine, speaking of the views of the Reformers upon this subject, says, in an often quoted passage,\* “*Si solum vellent, nobis imputari Christi merita, quia nobis donata sunt, et possumus ea Deo Patri offerre pro peccatis nostris, quoniam Christus susceperit super se onus satisfaciendi pro nobis, nosque Deo Patri reconciliandi, recta esset eorum sententia.*” And Protestant divines have usually answered by saying, they just mean this, and nothing more than this, when they contend that Christ's satisfactory sufferings and meritorious obedience are

\* Bellarm.. De Justificat.. Lib. ii.. c. vii.

imputed to men for their justification,—viz., that the merits of Christ are given to them, and that they, as it were, present them to the Father as the ground of their forgiveness and acceptance. And all that they ask of the Romanists is, that, in place of evading this concession, as Bellarmine does, by attempting to involve the subject in obscurity by the help of the scholastic distinction of a formal cause, they would just form a clear and definite conception of what the statement means, and honestly apply it to the matter in hand. If it be admitted that the meritorious obedience of Christ is given to us, and may be presented or offered by us, to the Father, and if men would attempt to realize what this means, they could not fail to see that they are bound, in consistency, to hold that it was rendered in our room and stead,—that it is, in consequence, freely bestowed upon us,—and, being on this ground held or reckoned as ours, becomes thus the basis on which God communicates to us all the blessings which Christ, by His meritorious obedience, purchased for us, and which are necessary for our eternal happiness.

It is proper to mention that there have been some, though few, Calvinistic divines, who have rejected the distinction between forgiveness and acceptance, and between the passive and the active righteousness of Christ, as not being in their judgment sufficiently established by Scripture, and have appealed to the authority of Calvin, without any sufficient warrant, as sanctioning this opinion.\* The Calvinistic divines who have most distinguished themselves by deviating from the orthodox doctrine upon this subject, are Piscator and Wendelinus, who both belonged to the German Reformed Church, the former of whom flourished about the beginning, and the latter about the middle, of the seventeenth century; while, on the other hand, it is interesting to notice that, until all sound doctrine was destroyed in the Lutheran Church by the prevalence of Rationalism, these distinctions were strenuously maintained by the most eminent Lutheran divines. The general considerations on which Piscator and Wendelinus based† their opinion are of no force, except upon

\* The Reformers and Theology of the Reformation, pp. 402, etc. (Edrs.).

† Piscator's letter to the French clergy, in defence of his views on this subject, is given in the "Præstantium ac eruditorum virorum Epistolæ

Ecclesiasticæ et Theologicæ." p. 121, 3d edition. Wendelinus, *Christ. Theol. System.*, Lib. i., c. xxv., Thes. vii. *Vide* also Whitby's Commentary on the New Testament, at the end of 1 Corinthians.



the assumption of principles which would overturn altogether the scriptural doctrines of substitution and imputation. The whole question upon the subject resolves into this, Whether we have sufficiently clear indications of the distinction in Scripture,—a question in the discussion of which it has been shown that the Scripture evidence is sufficient, and that the opponents of the distinction demand a measure of evidence in point of amount, and of directness or explicitness, that is quite unreasonable. At the same time, many eminent divines have been of opinion that the controversies which have been carried on, on this subject, have led some of the defenders of the truth to give a prominence and an importance to this distinction beyond what Scripture warrants, and scarcely in keeping with the general scope and spirit of its statements. There is no trace of this tendency to excess in the admirably cautious and accurate declarations of our Confession of Faith; and the danger of yielding to it, and, at the same time, the importance of maintaining the whole truth upon the point as sanctioned by Scripture, are very clearly and ably enforced by Turretine.\*

Papists, and other opponents of the truth upon this subject, usually represent an imputed righteousness as if it were a putative, fictitious, or imaginary righteousness. But this representation has no foundation in anything that was held by the Reformers, or that can be shown to be involved in, or deducible from, their doctrine. The righteousness of Christ, including the whole of His perfect and meritorious obedience to the law, as well as His suffering, was a great and infinitely important reality. It was intended to effect and secure the salvation of all those whom God had chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. It is in due time, and in accordance with the arrangements which God in His infinite wisdom has laid down, bestowed upon each of them, through his union to Christ by faith, not in any mere fiction of law, but in actual deed; and being thus really, and not merely putatively or by a fiction, bestowed upon them, it is, of course, held or reckoned as theirs, and *thus* becomes the ground—the full and

\* Turret., De Officio Christi Mediatorio, Loc. xiv., Q. xiii., secs. xi. xii. For a full discussion of this topic, see De Moor Comment. in Marc. Compend. cap. xx., sec. xvii., tom. iii., pp.

959-77. Gerhard. Loci Communes, Loc. xvii., c. ii., secs. lvii.-lxiv., in Cotta's edition, tom. vii., pp. 61-72; folio, tom. iii., p. 485-95.



adequate ground—on which God further bestows upon them the forgiveness of all their sins, and a right to the heavenly inheritance, and to all the privileges of sonship; so that they feel it ever thereafter to be at once their duty and their privilege, on the ground of clear and definite conceptions of what Christ has purchased and merited for them, to ascribe all that they are, and have, and hope for, to Him who not only washed them from their sins in His own blood, but has also made them kings and priests unto God and His Father.

*Sec. IV.—Justification by Faith alone.*

The justification of sinners,—*i.e.*, the actual forgiveness of their sins, and the acceptance of their persons, or the bestowal upon them of a right and title to life,—are ascribed in Scripture to God, or to His grace; they are ascribed to Christ, and to what He has done and suffered in our room and stead; and they are ascribed to faith. The propositions, then, that men are justified by God's grace, that they are justified by Christ's sufferings and merits, and that they are justified by faith, are all true, and should all be understood and believed. A full exposition of the Scripture doctrine of justification requires that all these propositions be interpreted in their true scriptural sense, and that they be combined together in their just relation, so as to form a harmonious whole. It is to the third and last of these fundamental propositions, constituting the scriptural doctrine of justification, that we have now briefly to advert,—*viz.*, that men are justified by faith.

This proposition is so frequently asserted in Scripture, in express terms, that it is not denied by any who acknowledge the divine authority of the Bible. But the discussion of the sense in which the proposition is to be understood, and the way and manner in which this truth is to be connected and combined with the other departments of scriptural doctrine upon the subject of justification, occupied, as we have already explained, a most important place in the controversies which were carried on between the Reformers and the Romanists. The disputes upon this subject involved the discussion of three different questions,—*viz.*, First, What is the nature of justifying faith, or what is the definition or description of that faith to which justification

is ascribed in Scripture? Secondly, Whether there be anything else in men themselves that concurs or co-operates with their faith in the matter of their justification,—anything else in them that is represented as standing in the same relation to their justification as faith does? Thirdly, In what way, by what process, or by what sort of agency or instrumentality is it that faith justifies; and how is the agency or instrumentality, that is assigned to faith in the matter of justification, to be connected and combined with the causality assigned in the matter to the grace of God, and the righteousness of Christ imputed?

The first question, then, respected the nature of justifying faith, or the proper definition or description of that faith to which in Scripture justification is ascribed. I have already explained that, upon this point, the differences between the Reformers and the Romanists lay in this, that the Romanists defined faith to be *assensus*, and placed its seat in the intellect; and that the Reformers defined it to be *fiducia*, and placed its seat in the will; while, at the same time, I mentioned that a very considerable diversity of sentiment had prevailed among orthodox Protestant divines in subsequent times as to the way in which justifying faith should be defined and described, and expressed my opinion that some diversity of sentiment upon this point was not precluded by anything laid down in the standards of our church. I shall merely make a few observations regarding it, premising that this is one of the topics where, I think, it must be admitted that greater precision and accuracy, and a more careful and exact analysis, than were usually manifested by the Reformers in treating of it, were introduced into the exposition and discussion of the subject by the great systematic divines of the seventeenth century.\*

Romanists define justifying faith to be the mere assent of the understanding to the whole truth of God revealed; and in this view of its nature and import they have been followed by a class of divines who are generally known in modern times, and in this country, under the name of Sandemanians, and who have commonly been disposed to claim to themselves the credit of propounding much clearer and simpler views of this subject, and of

\* See "The Reformation and Theology of the Reformation," p. 200. (The)

scriptural doctrine generally, than those who give a somewhat different definition or description of faith. Those who define faith to be the mere assent of the understanding to truth revealed, of course regard everything else that may be in any way necessary to justification, or that can be proved to exist invariably in justified men, as the fruit, or consequence, or result of faith; while they maintain that nothing but the mere belief of truth revealed enters into its proper nature, or should form any part of the definition that ought to be given of what faith is. And the Protestant defenders of this view of the nature of justifying faith differ from its Popish advocates chiefly in this,—which, however, is a difference of great importance,—that the Protestants regard everything else that may be connected with justification, or that must exist in justified men, as the *invariable and necessary* fruit or consequence of the belief of the truth; while the Romanists, as we have seen, maintain that true faith—that faith which justifies whenever justification takes place—may exist, without producing any practical result, and, of course, without justifying. We have already proved this, in regard to the Romanists, by quotations from Bellarmine; and we may add, that so confidently does he maintain this position, that he founds upon it as an argument to prove that faith alone does not justify.

The great majority of the most eminent and most orthodox Protestant divines\* have held this view of the nature of justifying faith to be defective; *i.e.*, they have regarded it as not including *all* that ought to be included in the definition of faith. While the Reformers thought justifying faith to be most properly defined by *fiducia*, trust or confidence, they do not, of course, deny that it contained or comprehended *notitia* and *assensus*, knowledge and assent. They all admitted that it is the duty of men,—and, in a sense, their first and most fundamental duty,—in order to their salvation, to understand and believe what God had revealed; and that the knowledge and belief of the truth revealed—of what God has actually said in His word—must be the basis and foundation of all the other steps they take in the matter of their salvation, and the source or cause, in some sense, of all the necessary changes that

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\* Le Blanc's "Theses Theologicæ Sedanenses," pp. 204-248. O'Brien on Justification, notes 1, 2, 3, 1st edition; notes A and B, 2d edition. (Edrs.)

are effected upon them. It is by the truth which He reveals that God brings Himself into contact with His rational creatures; and we learn from His word, that the instrumentality of the truth revealed is employed by Him in all His dealings with them, and in all the changes which He effects upon them, with a view to their salvation. Now, the direct and proper correlative acts to truth revealed by God to His rational creatures, are, understanding its meaning, and assenting to it, or believing it, as real and certain; and these, of course, are acts of the intellect. The knowledge and belief of the truth revealed are, therefore, the primary and fundamental duties incumbent upon men, and are essential parts or elements of justifying and saving faith. Were we in a condition in which we were at liberty to determine this question purely upon philosophical grounds, and had no other materials for deciding it, it might be contended—and I do not well see how, *in these circumstances*, the position could be disproved—that the knowledge and belief of the doctrines revealed in Scripture must certainly and necessarily lead men to trust in Christ, and to submit to His authority, and thus produce or effect everything necessary for justification and salvation; and that, on this ground, justifying faith might be properly defined to be the belief of the truth revealed; while everything else, which some might be disposed to comprehend under it, might be rather regarded as its invariable and necessary result or consequence. The question, however, cannot *be legitimately* settled in this way; for, indeed, the question itself properly is, In what sense is the faith to which justification is ascribed used in Scripture? or what is it which the Scripture includes in, or comprehends under, the word faith? And this question can be settled only by an examination of the passages in which the word faith and its cognates occur,—an examination on which we do not propose at present to enter.

It can scarcely be disputed that the word faith is used in Scripture in a variety of senses, and more especially that it is employed there in a wider and in a more limited signification, as if it were used sometimes to designate a whole, and at other times some one or more of the parts or elements of which this whole is composed. It is on this account that it has always been found so difficult to give anything like a formal definition of faith in its scriptural acceptance,—a definition that should include all that the Scripture comprehends under faith itself, as proper to it, and nothing



more. At the same time, while it is admitted that faith is sometimes used in Scripture in the sense of mere belief or assent to truth, in such a sense as would require us, *were it received as the only and complete definition of faith*, to regard trust or confidence in Christ, receiving and embracing Him, rather as consequences of faith, than as parts or acts of faith, I think it has been proved by Protestant divines, in opposition to the Romanists, that trust or confidence, which is an act of the will, does enter into the ordinary and full idea of scriptural faith; and that the faith by which men are said to be justified, includes in it (and not merely produces) something more than the belief of truths or doctrines,—even trust or confidence *in a person*,—in Him who has purchased for us all the blessings of redemption, who *has* all these blessings in Himself, and who, in His word, is offering Himself and all these blessings to us, and inviting us to accept them. It may be said to be more correct, metaphysically, to represent this trust or confidence in Christ, this receiving and resting upon Him for salvation, as the fruit, or result, or consequence of faith, in its strict and proper sense: and no doubt *it is* a result or consequence of knowing and assenting to the truths revealed in Scripture concerning Him, and concerning this salvation which He has purchased and is offering; but it is also true,—*i.e.*, I think this has been proved,—that Scripture represents the faith by which men are justified as including or containing that state of mind which can be described only by such words as trust and confidence, and as involving or comprehending that act, or those acts, which are described as accepting, embracing, receiving, and resting upon Christ and His work for salvation. There is nothing in this scriptural view of the matter,—nothing in this scriptural use of language,—which in the least *contradicts* any sound metaphysical principles about the connection between the operations of the understanding and the will: for the substance of the whole matter is just this, that the Scripture does not ordinarily and generally call *that* faith which is descriptive of a state of mind that is merely intellectual, and which does not comprehend acts that involve an exercise of the powers of the will; and, more especially, it does not represent men as justified by faith, or as possessed of the faith which justifies, until they have been enabled,—no doubt under the influence, or as the result, of scriptural views of Christ and His work,—to exercise trust and confidence in Him as their



Saviour; to accept, to lay hold of, and to apply to themselves, the blessings of forgiveness and acceptance, which He has purchased for them, and is offering to them in the word of the truth of the gospel.

But I need not dwell longer upon this point, and must proceed to advert to the second question, viz., Whether faith alone justifies; or whether there be anything else in men themselves that is represented in Scripture as the cause, in any sense, why men individually receive forgiveness and acceptance at the hand of God? It was the unanimous doctrine of the Reformers, and one to which they attached very great importance, that men are justified by faith alone: not meaning that the faith which justified them existed alone, or solitarily; but, on the contrary, maintaining that this faith "is ever accompanied with all other saving graces:" not meaning that nothing else was required of men in order to their being forgiven,—for they believed that, in order that we may escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin, God requireth of us repentance unto life as well as faith in Jesus Christ; but meaning this, that there is nothing else in men themselves to which their justification is in Scripture ascribed,—nothing else required of them, and existing in them, which stands in the same relation to justification as their faith does, or exerts any causality, or efficiency, or instrumentality in producing the result of their being justified.

The Council of Trent openly denied this fundamental doctrine of the Reformers, and maintained that there were six other virtues, as they call them, which all concurred with faith in obtaining for men the grace of justification. They did not, indeed, assign to these virtues, or even to faith itself, any power of justifying, properly so called, but only that of preparing or disposing men to justification. They did, however,—and that is the only point with which we have at present to do,—deny the Protestant doctrine, that faith is the only thing in men themselves by which they are justified; and they denied this, in the way of ascribing to these six other virtues the very same relation to justification, and the very same kind of influence in producing or procuring it, which they ascribe to faith: and this was very distinctly and explicitly brought out in the quotations I have already made from Bellarmine. These six virtues are,—fear, hope, love, penitence, a purpose of receiving the sacrament, and a purpose of leading

a life of obedience; and Bellarmine, and other defenders of the doctrine of the Church of Rome, labour to prove from Scripture that these qualities, or states of mind and feeling, are represented there as procuring or obtaining for men the forgiveness of their sins, and the enjoyment of God's favour. It is certain that there is not one of them which is ever, in express terms, said in Scripture to justify men, or by which men are said to be justified, while men are frequently and most explicitly said to be justified by faith; and this single consideration may be fairly regarded as by itself a proof that, at least, they do not stand in the same relation to justification as faith does,—that *it* holds a place, and exerts an influence, in the justification of sinners, which do not belong to any of them. All that can be proved from Scripture about these things, speaking of them generally, is, first, that they all exist in, and are wrought by God upon, those men whom He justifies; and, secondly, that they are all duties which He requires of men; and that, of course, upon both these grounds they are in some sense pleasing and acceptable to Him. These positions can be proved; but the proof of them affords no ground whatever for the conclusion that men are justified by these graces, or that they exert any influence in procuring or obtaining for men the forgiveness of their sins and the enjoyment of God's favour: for it is manifest that God may require, as a matter of duty, or bestow as a matter of grace, what may exert no influence, and have no real efficient bearing, upon other gifts which He also bestows.

Indeed, it may be justly contended that no gift or favour which God bestows, can, *simply as such*, exert any real influence in procuring for men other favours at His hand. God may, indeed, in the exercise of His wisdom, resolve, with a view to general and ulterior objects, to bestow His gifts or favours in a certain order, and with something like mutual dependence between them; and we may be able to see something of the suitableness and wisdom of this arrangement; but this affords no ground for our asserting that the one first conferred exerted any influence in procuring or obtaining for us the one that was subsequently bestowed. As the discharge of duties which God requires of men, these virtues are, in so far as they may be really in conformity with what He enjoins, agreeable to His will, pleasing and acceptable in His sight; but this does not prove that they can procure for men the forgiveness of their sins, or a right or title to eternal life.

The fact, then, that these things are represented in Scripture as required by God of men, and as conferred by Him as graces or favours upon all those whom He justifies,—and this is all that the Scripture proofs adduced by Romanists, in discussing this subject, establish,—affords no evidence that men are justified by them, or that they have any place or influence in procuring or obtaining for men forgiveness and acceptance.

But, perhaps, it may be said that the same considerations apply equally to faith, which is also a duty required by God, and a grace bestowed by Him. We admit that they do; but then we answer, first, that we assert, and undertake to prove, as will be afterwards explained, that though faith is both a duty commanded and a grace bestowed, it is not in either of these capacities, or simply as such, that it justifies, but solely as the instrument or hand by which men receive and lay hold of the righteousness of Christ; and, secondly, that the object and the practical result of these considerations are not directly to disprove or exclude the justifying efficacy of these virtues, but *merely* to show that the inference in support of their alleged justifying efficacy,—which is based solely upon the fact that they are represented as existing in all justified men, being conferred by God and required by Him,—is unfounded. Men are never said, in Scripture, to be justified by them; and *the only* process by which it is attempted to show that any justifying efficacy attaches to them, is by this *inference* from *other* things said about them in Scripture; and if this inference can be shown to be unfounded,—and this, we think, the considerations above adduced accomplish,—then the argument which we are opposing falls to the ground. The state of the case is very different with respect to faith. We do *not need* to prove, by an inferential process of reasoning, from Scripture that faith justifies; for this is frequently asserted in express terms, and thus stands proved without any argument or inference. We have merely to *answer* the inferential process by which it is attempted to prove, in the absence of all direct scriptural authority, that men are justified by these virtues as well as by faith; and having done this, we then fall back again upon the position that men are expressly said in Scripture to be justified by faith, while it cannot be shown, either directly or by inference, that they are represented as being justified by any of those virtues to which Romanists assign a co-ordinate place with faith in the matter.

Not only, however, are men said to be justified by faith, while they are not said, directly or by implication, to be justified by anything else existing in themselves: they are also said to be justified by faith without works or deeds of law. This, indeed, is the great doctrine which the Apostle Paul lays down, and formally and elaborately proves, in the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians; and no effort has been spared by Romanists, and other opponents of evangelical truth, to pervert the apostle's statements into an accordance with their views. This, of course, opens up a wide field of critical discussion, upon which we do not enter. The great subject of controversy is, What is it that the apostle intended to exclude from any co-operation or joint efficacy with faith in the matter of the justification of sinners, under the name of works or deeds of law? Now, it was contended by all the Reformers, that, according to the natural and proper import of the apostle's words, and the general scope and object of his argument, especially in his Epistle to the Romans, he must have intended to exclude from all joint or co-ordinate efficacy with faith in the matter of justification, all obedience which men did or could render to the requirements of the law under which they were placed, whatever that might be; while it has been alleged by Romanists, and other enemies of the doctrine of gratuitous justification, that he meant merely to exclude, as some say, the works of the ceremonial law; others, obedience to the Mosaic law in general; and others, all works performed, or obedience rendered to the divine law, by men, in the exercise of their natural and unaided powers, previously to the reception of divine grace, and the production of justifying faith.

The opinion which would limit the apostle's exclusion of works from co-operating with faith in the justification of sinners, to the observance of the requirements of the ceremonial law, is too obviously inconsistent with the whole tenor and scope of his statements, to be entitled to much consideration. It is not denied that there are statements in the apostle's writings upon the subject of justification, especially in the Epistle to the Galatians, in which he has chiefly in view those who enforced the observance of the Mosaic law as necessary to forgiveness and acceptance; and is showing, in opposition to them, that the obedience which might be rendered to it had no influence in the matter, and was wholly excluded from any joint efficacy with faith in obtaining justifica-



tion; while it is contended that, even in the Epistle to the Galatians, he argues for the exclusion of the observance of the Mosaic law, from the matter of justification, upon principles and grounds which have a wider and more general bearing, and which equally exclude all mere obedience to law, as such. And in the Epistle to the Romans,—where, after having proved the guilt and sinfulness of all men, both Jews and Gentiles, he addressed himself equally to both classes,—his object evidently required, and his statements plainly imply, that it was law, as such, under whatever form, and obedience to law, by whomsoever rendered, and from whatsoever principle proceeding, that are excluded from any influence in procuring the justification of sinners.

The Romanists generally allege that the apostle meant to exclude only works done, or obedience to law rendered, by men's natural and unaided powers, before they receive the grace of God, and are enabled to exercise faith; and thus they leave room for bringing in their six other virtues, which they ascribe to the operation of God's grace, and regard as springing from faith. This is, perhaps, upon the whole, the most plausible expedient for perverting the apostle's meaning, at least so far as the Epistle to the Romans is concerned; but it is liable to insuperable objections. It is wholly unwarranted and gratuitous. There is nothing in the apostle's statements to suggest it,—nothing in his argument, or in the principles on which it is based, to require it; nothing in any part of Scripture to oblige or entitle us to force upon him an idea which seems not to have been present to his own mind. The distinction between these two kinds or classes of works has evidently been devised,—*i.e.*, so far as its application to this matter is concerned, for in itself it is a real and important distinction,—in order to serve a purpose; and its only real foundation is, that some men have chosen to believe and assert that these virtues or graces, since they exist in justified men, must have some share in procuring their justification. And while the distinction is thus, in this application of it, wholly unwarranted and gratuitous, it can be shown to be positively inconsistent with the scope of the apostle's argument, which implies that any mere obedience rendered to any law,—any mere compliance with any of God's requirements, in whatever source originating, on whatever principles based,—*viewed simply as such*, would, if introduced into the matter of a sinner's justification, as having any efficacy in procuring or obtaining it,



be inconsistent at once with the purely gratuitous character of God's act in pardoning and accepting, and with the place or influence assigned to faith in the matter. Grace, or gratuitousness, and faith, are described as not only consistent, but as fully and admirably harmonizing with each other; while obedience to law, so far as concerns the matter of justification, is represented as a principle of an opposite character or tendency, not only having no influence in procuring justification, but tending,—so far as it may be introduced into this matter, and relied upon in connection with it,—to exclude the operation of the principles on which God has been pleased to regulate this subject, and to frustrate His gracious design. This is the doctrine taught by Paul, clearly implied in many of his particular statements, and in the general scope and substance of his argument; and there is nothing whatever in any part of his writings that requires or entitles us to modify this view of his meaning.

One main objection that has been adduced against receiving this interpretation of Paul's statements as the true doctrine of Scripture on the subject of justification, is, that the Apostle James seems to teach an opposite doctrine, when, in the second chapter of his epistle, he asserts that men are justified by works, and not by faith only; and that Abraham and Rahab were justified by works. This question of the reconciliation of Paul and James upon the subject of justification, has also given rise to much interesting critical discussion. I shall only state, in general, that I am persuaded that the two following positions have been established regarding it. First, that the Apostle James did not intend to discuss, and does not discuss, the subject of justification in the sense in which it is so fully expounded in Paul's Epistles to the Romans and Galatians; that he does not state anything about the grounds or principles on which,—the way and manner *in* which,—sinners are admitted to forgiveness and the favour of God; and that his great general object is simply to set forth the real tendency and result of that true living faith which holds so important a place in everything connected with the salvation of sinners. The truth of this position is very clearly indicated by the terms in which James introduces the subject in the fourteenth verse: "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man *say* he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?" or rather *the* faith, for the original has the article, ἡ πίστις; *i.e.*, the faith

which he says he has, or professes to have, but really has not,—can that faith save him? This is the subject which alone the apostle proposed to discuss, and there is nothing in the following statements sufficient to show that any other subject than this was introduced in the course of the discussion, or that the apostle gave, or intended to give, any deliverance whatever upon the grounds or reasons of the justification of a sinner before God, or upon the way and manner in which he obtains forgiveness and acceptance. Secondly, that the justification of which James speaks, and which he ascribes to works, refers to something in men's history posterior to that great era when their sins are forgiven, and they are admitted to the enjoyment of God's favour,—*i.e.*, to the proof or manifestation of the reality and efficacy of their faith to themselves and their fellow-men. This position may be shown to be virtually involved in, or clearly deducible from, the former one, and has, besides, its own proper and peculiar evidence,—especially in the application which the apostle makes of the case of Abraham, in saying that he was justified by works, when he had offered up Isaac his son upon the altar; for it is quite certain, from the history of Abraham's life, that, many years before he was thus justified by works, he had, as the Apostle Paul tells us, been justified by faith,—*i.e.*, had had his sins forgiven, and had been admitted fully and unchangeably into the favour and friendship of God, and had thus passed that great crisis on which the eternal happiness of every sinner depends, and the nature, grounds, and means of which it was Paul's sole object to expound in all that he has written upon the subject of justification. So evident is the posteriority of the justification by works, of which James speaks, to the proper forgiveness and acceptance of sinners, that many Popish writers,—in this, manifesting greater candour than that large body of Episcopalian writers who have followed the system of interpretation set forth in Bishop Bull's "Harmonia Apostolica,"—regard James' justification as applying, not to the *first*, but to what they call the *second*, justification, or that process by which a justified person is made more righteous.

This notion of theirs about a first and second justification,—comprehending, as they do, under that word, both forgiveness and sanctification,—is utterly unfounded, and tends to pervert the whole doctrine of Scripture upon the subject. For the Scripture teaches that, while God, by His grace, makes justified men pro-

gressively more holy, He “continues to forgive” the sins which they commit, on the very same grounds, and through the very same process, by which the forgiveness of all their past sins was originally bestowed upon them. But still the application of this notion to the interpretation of James’ statements upon the subject, shows a somewhat juster appreciation than many of the Protestant corrupters of the doctrine of justification have exhibited, of the difficulty of extracting anything from James that could contradict and overturn Paul’s great doctrine of justification by faith alone, without deeds of law.

If these two positions can be established, the apparent discrepancy between the apostles is removed; each asserts his own doctrine, without contradicting the other; and we remain not only warranted, but bound, to hold as absolute and unqualified, Paul’s exclusion of works, or of mere obedience to law, from the matter of a sinner’s justification before God; and to regard his doctrine that men are justified by faith, without deeds of law, as meaning, what it naturally and obviously imports, that men are justified by faith alone, or that there is nothing else in them which concurs or co-operates with faith in procuring or obtaining their forgiveness and acceptance. But here again it may be alleged that faith itself is a work or act of obedience; and that therefore, upon this interpretation of the apostles’ statements, it too must be excluded from any influence or efficacy in justification. This leads us to the consideration of the *third* question, as to the way and manner in which faith justifies, or the place it holds in the matter of justification; and a brief exposition of this topic will not only solve the objection that has now been stated, but afford additional confirmation to the great Protestant doctrine, that men are justified by faith only; and at the same time lead to an explanation of the relation that subsists among the great doctrines, that men are justified by God’s grace, that they are justified by Christ’s righteousness, and that they are justified by faith alone.

#### *Sec. V.—Office of Faith in Justifying.*

We have good and sufficient grounds in Scripture for maintaining—first, that the justification of a sinner is a purely gratuitous act of God, to the exclusion of all merit or desert on the part of the sinner himself; secondly, that the imputed righteousness of

Christ is the sole ground, basis, or reason of the divine procedure in justifying a sinner,—the only thing to which God has respect or regard, as that on account of which He acts, in bestowing upon any one pardon and acceptance; and, thirdly, that faith in Jesus Christ is the only thing in men themselves, to the exclusion of all works, or mere obedience to law, to which their justification is ascribed, or which is represented as exerting, in any sense, anything like a causality or efficiency in obtaining for them pardon and acceptance at God's hand. And if Scripture fully sanctions each of these three positions separately, then the whole doctrine of Scripture upon the subject can be brought out and set forth, only by combining them all into one general statement, and by unfolding the harmony and relations of the different truths of which this general statement is made up.

The objection adduced against the entire exclusion of works from the matter of justification,—one of the elements involved in the third of these positions,—that faith itself is a work, and that, therefore, if the exclusion is to be strict and absolute, faith, being a work, must be excluded, it is easy enough to answer. Faith, of course, *cannot* be excluded; for justification is frequently and most expressly ascribed to it; and, therefore, had we nothing else to say upon the subject, we would be fully entitled to make faith an exception to the apostle's unqualified exclusion of works: because, to suppose that it was not to be excepted, would involve the apostle in a self-contradiction, too gross and palpable to be ascribed to any man without absolute necessity; while, at the same time, by admitting, upon this ground, that faith must necessarily be excepted from his exclusion of works, we would be under no obligation, in sound argument, to admit of any other exception to the exclusion, unless as conclusive a reason could be brought forward for excepting it as exists for excepting faith. The apostle says, with reference to another subject,\* “But when He saith, All things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted which did put all things under Him.” So we say, upon a similar principle, that when deeds of law are excluded, faith must be excepted; for the very same statement which excludes them, expressly includes *it*,—*that statement being*, that men are justified by faith without deeds of law.

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\* 1 Cor. xv. 27.



As to the allegation which may be said to constitute the objection, viz., that if we are to except from the exclusion of works, faith, which is a work, we may except other works also, the answer is obvious and conclusive,—viz., that any proposed exception to the apostle's general and unlimited exclusion of works, must be individually warranted and established by scriptural evidence,—that we might possibly admit other exceptions, if good scriptural evidence could be adduced in support of them,—but that, in point of fact, no good reason has been, or can be, adduced in support of any other exception to the exclusion but faith. This is quite a sufficient answer to the objection; and, as a mere question of dialectics, nothing more need be said about it. But then, as we have already intimated, it suggests some further considerations of importance as to the way and manner in which faith justifies, and the relation which subsists among the great truths which go to make up the scriptural doctrine of justification.

It is manifest, not only from Paul's particular statements in discussing this subject, but from the general scope of his argument, and the principles on which it is all based, that his exclusion of works or deeds of law was intended to be very full and complete; and that, therefore, the more nearly we can make it absolute, as he *in terminis* represents it, the more nearly we approach to the views which filled his mind. Now, the general doctrine, upon this subject, of those Protestant divines who have maintained the theology of the Reformation, has been this, that though faith cannot be excluded from the justification of a sinner, and though faith is a work,—*i.e.*, an act of obedience rendered by men, and, at the same time, a grace conferred on them, and wrought in them by God,—yet it is not *as a work* that it justifies, or is concerned in the matter of a sinner's justification, but in a different capacity or relation,—viz., simply as the instrument of apprehending or receiving the righteousness of Christ. And it is manifest that, if good evidence can be adduced in support of this view of the place which faith holds, or the influence which it exerts in the justification of sinners, this must be an additional confirmation of the great Protestant doctrine, that men are justified by faith alone, without deeds of law, in its obvious and literal import, while it will also contribute to elucidate the whole subject of justification.

Now, it is admitted that there are no statements contained in



Scripture which professedly and directly explain, in any very formal or categorial manner, *how* it is that faith acts or operates in the justification of a sinner; but it is contended that there are sufficient materials in Scripture to establish satisfactorily the common Protestant doctrine upon this subject. There is not much that is very definite to be learned upon this precise point,—viz., as to the way in which faith justifies,—from the general and fundamental declaration, that men are justified by faith. The forms in which this is expressed in Scripture are these, *πιστει*, *εκ πιστεως*, and *δια πιστεως*; in Latin, *fide*, *ex fide*, and *per fidem*. These expressions all indicate, in general, that some sort of causality, or efficiency, or instrumentality, is ascribed to faith in the matter of justification, without specifying what,—though the fact that men are never said in Scripture to be justified, *δια πιστιν*, *propter fidem*, on account of faith, may, when taken in connection with the assertion that they are justified freely or gratuitously, and that works or deeds of law, mere obedience to requirements, are excluded, be fairly regarded as amply sufficient to disprove the common Popish doctrine that faith justifies on account of its worth, dignity, or excellence,—meriting God's favour *ex congruo* though not *ex condigno*. This may, accordingly, be received as our negative position as to the way and manner in which faith justifies; and some direct and positive light is thrown upon the subject by those scriptural statements which represent faith as a looking to Christ, receiving Him, apprehending Him, laying hold of Him. These scriptural representations naturally and obviously suggest the idea, that the essence of that which men do when they believe in Christ, in so far as the matter of their justification is concerned, is, that they receive or accept of Christ, held out to them, or offered to them; and that the proper, direct, and immediate effect of their faith in Christ, is, that they in this way become possessed of Him, and of the blessings which are in Him,—*i.e.*, the blessings which He purchased, and which are necessary to their salvation. If this, then, be the process,—as the scriptural representations referred to plainly indicate,—by which men individually become possessed of the blessings which Christ purchased and merited for them, including pardon and acceptance, then it plainly follows that faith justifies, as it is put by Turretine,\* “*non propriè et per*

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\* Turret., Locus xvi., Q. vii.

se," sed "tantum relativè et organicè;" or, as the mean or instrument of receiving, or laying hold of, Christ's righteousness.

We are thus led to consider more particularly what we have more than once adverted to,—viz., the relation between the way and manner in which faith justifies, and the other truths taught in Scripture concerning the causes, grounds, or reasons of a sinner's justification. If men are justified freely or gratuitously by God's grace, this implies that neither faith nor anything else can have any meritorious efficacy in procuring justification; as the Council of Trent admits in words, but in words so chosen of purpose, as to leave a liberty to Romanists,—of which, as we have seen, they generally take advantage,—to maintain that faith and half a dozen of other virtues, as they call them, *do* merit justification, of congruity, though not of condignity. If Christ's righteousness imputed be that to which God has direct or immediate respect or regard in each case in which He justifies a sinner, then it follows that faith can justify only as being the cause, or means, or instrument, by or through which God bestows Christ's righteousness upon men, and by or through which they receive or become possessed of it. In short, the whole doctrine of Scripture upon the subject must be taken into account; its different parts must be all embraced in a general declaration; their relations must be brought out; and the necessity of combining and harmonizing the different truths taught regarding it may legitimately modify, *if necessary*, the precise way and manner in which each is to be stated, explained, and applied. Accordingly, we find, in point of fact, that men's views of the place which faith holds, and the influence which it exerts, in the justification of sinners, are usually determined by the views they take of the other departments of this subject, and especially of the grounds or reasons on which God's act in justification is based.

This important observation is thus expressed by Dr Owen in the third chapter of his great work on justification: "When men have fixed their apprehensions about the principal matters in controversy, they express what concerneth the use of faith in an accommodation thereunto."\* "Thus it is with all who affirm faith to be either the instrument, or the condition, or the *causa sine qua non*, or the preparation and disposition of the subject, or a meri-

\* Owen on Justification, vol. v., p. 107, Gould's edition; xi. 134, Orme's ed.

torious cause by way of condecency or congruity, in and of our justification. For all these notions of the use of faith are suited and accommodated unto the opinions of men, 'concerning the nature and principal causes of justification.'" There are five views mentioned here by Dr Owen of the use of faith in justification, or of the way and manner in which it justifies,—viz., first, as an instrument; secondly, as a condition; thirdly, as a *causa sine quâ non*; fourthly, as preparing and disposing men to receive justification; and, fifthly, as meriting it of congruity. The first view, which represents faith as the instrument or instrumental cause of justification,—i.e., as justifying simply as it is the appointed means by or through which men individually receive or lay hold of the righteousness of Christ,—was that which was taken by all the Reformers, and which has been ever since held by almost all Protestants who have honestly and cordially embraced the theology of the Reformation. The fourth, which represents faith as justifying, inasmuch as it prepares and disposes men to justification, is that which is explicitly taught by the Council of Trent; while, *along with this*, the fifth,—viz., that it justifies because it merits justification *ex congruo*,—is also held, as we have seen, by most Romish writers, not indeed with the express sanction, but with the connivance—the intended connivance—of the council, and without contradicting any of its decisions.

As, however, Romanists ascribe this preparatory, dispositive, and meritorious efficacy, with reference to justification, equally to other virtues besides faith, and yet cannot dispute that, in Scripture, faith has a special and peculiar prominence assigned to it in the matter, I may, following out and applying Dr Owen's idea, state that, in accordance with their fundamental principles,—viz., that an inherent personal righteousness, infused into us by God's grace, and not the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, is the formal cause, the proper ground, or reason of our justification,—they explain the special prominence, the peculiar influence, ascribed to faith in the matter, by saying that faith justifies, inasmuch as it "is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and the root of all justification,"—i.e., the chief source from which all holiness and obedience spring.\* The second and third views of the uses of faith, mentioned by Dr Owen,—viz., that it justifies, as being

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\* Con. Trident., sess. vi., c. viii.

the condition, or the *causa sine quâ non* of justification,—are capable of a variety of explanations, and have been maintained, or at least admitted, by persons who hold different opinions, more or less scriptural, or the reverse, concerning the grounds or reasons of justification, which are explained at some length in the chapter of Dr Owen to which I have referred. Some writers distinguish between a condition and a *causa sine quâ non* in this matter; and others identify them, or explain the one by the other. Different meanings have also been attached to each of these expressions; and according as they are explained more strictly or more loosely, different classes of divines have been disposed, according to the opinions they held upon other departments of the general subject, to admit or reject the use of them, as descriptive of the place or function of faith in this matter.

The substance of the truth upon the point,—speaking historically,—may be embodied in the two following propositions. First, orthodox divines, who have held the imputed righteousness of Christ to be the proper ground or reason of a sinner's justification, have generally,—while greatly preferring the use of the word instrument, or instrumental cause, as most correctly and appropriately expressing the substance of what Scripture suggests upon this point,—admitted that there is a sense in which faith may be said to be the condition, or *causa sine quâ non*, of justification. An explanation of the sense in which the employment of these expressions is, and is not, consistent with scriptural views in regard to the ground of justification, will be found in Dr Owen's Treatise,\* and in Turretine.† In our Confession of Faith,‡ it is said that “faith, thus receiving and resting upon Christ, and His righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification;” and in the Larger Catechism§ it is said that “faith justifies a sinner in the sight of God, . . . *only as it is* an instrument by which he receiveth and applieth Christ and His righteousness.” And yet it is also said,|| that “the grace of God is manifested in the second covenant, in that He freely provideth and offereth to sinners a Mediator, and life and salvation by Him; and, requiring faith *as the condition* to interest them in Him, promiseth and giveth His Holy Spirit to

\* Dr Owen on Justification, c. iii.

† Turret., Loc. xvi., Quæ. vii.

‡ West. Conf., c. xi., s. ii.

§ Larger Catechism, Quæ. 73.

|| Ibid., Quæ. 32.



all His elect, to work in them that faith, with all other saving graces." Now, this statement, though it does not *directly* represent faith as the condition of justification, plainly implies that there is a sense in which faith, though it justifies only as an instrument, may yet be said to be the condition of an interest in the blessings of the covenant, and, of course, of pardon and acceptance.

Secondly, that those statements in which faith is represented as the condition, or *sine quâ non*, of justification, have been most generally and most freely used by men of unsound views upon the general subject; and that the use of them has been commonly avoided and discountenanced by orthodox divines, as, in their natural and obvious sense, they most readily harmonize with, and therefore tend to encourage, erroneous views of the grounds of justification. If the expressions, condition and *causa sine quâ non*, are understood to mean merely something required by God of men, in order to their being pardoned, invariably existing in all men who are justified, there can be no positive objection to applying them to faith. In this sense, indeed, they err by defect: they ascribe no sort of causality or efficiency to faith in the matter, give no indication or explanation of the special prominence ascribed to it in Scripture, and do not discriminate it from repentance, which is admitted to be required of God in order to our being forgiven, and to exist in all who are pardoned. And, accordingly, those orthodox divines who have approved of calling faith a condition of justification, and of the other blessings of the covenant of grace,—as, for instance, Marekii,\*—admit that repentance is equally, and in the same sense, a condition as faith is, and describe them both as, at once and alike, conditions of the covenant of grace, and duties of those who are in the covenant—*conditiones fœderis et officia fœderatorum*. In the only other sense which these words naturally and obviously bear, orthodox divines usually regard them as erring by excess,—as involving positive error,—inasmuch as the application of them to faith, in that sense, would imply that faith justified *as a work*,—which, with the Apostle

\* Marekii Compend. Theol., c. xxii. Vide De Moor, Comment., tom. iv., c. xxii. In opposition to the use of the word *condition*, see Witsius De Econ. Fœd., Lib. iii., c. i., secs. viii.-xvi.;

but compare with this his Irenicum, c. xii. Hoornbeck's Summa Controversiarum, Lib. x.; De Brownistis, pp. 812-831.

Paul's unqualified exclusion of works, is not to be admitted if it can be helped,—and that faith justifies, inasmuch as, by its own proper and inherent efficacy, it has a strict and proper, if not meritorious, causality in procuring or obtaining justification, or enters into the grounds or reasons on account of which God pardons and accepts. Accordingly, most of those who have contended most zealously for faith being the condition or *causa sine quâ non* of justification, have supported one or other of the two following views: First, that faith justifies, because it has in itself so much that is valuable and excellent, that for Christ's sake,—as they commonly say, though apparently without attaching any very definite idea to the expression,—God is led to reckon or impute it to men, as if it were perfect righteousness; or, secondly, that faith justifies, because, in addition to the worth or excellence it has of its own, it is the great cause which produces all other graces, and new obedience to God's law. Now, both of these views of the subject exclude, *and are intended to exclude*, the Scripture doctrine of the righteousness of Christ, as the only ground of a sinner's justification. They ascribe to faith a kind and degree of real efficiency in procuring or obtaining justification, which the word of God does not ascribe to it, and they are both explicitly condemned in the standards of our church.

On all these accounts, the expressions instrument, or instrumental cause, are those which have most generally commended themselves to orthodox divines, as indicating most correctly the place and influence assigned in Scripture to faith in the matter of a sinner's justification; Maestricht being, so far as I remember, almost the only orthodox divine of eminence who positively prefers the word condition to the word instrument.\* Since men are said to be justified by faith, faith must be, in some sense or other, more or less full and proper, the cause or means of their justification; and while a conjoint view of the whole doctrine of Scripture upon the subject leaves to faith no other place or influence than that of an instrument or instrumental cause, there is nothing whatever in Scripture that requires us to ascribe to it a higher kind or degree of causality,—a larger amount of real efficiency,—in the production of the result. But the Scripture not only marks out the general place or influence which alone faith can have in the matter; it

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\* Maestricht, Theol., Lib. vi., c. vi., secs. xiv. and xxviii.

very precisely and exactly indicates what its actual place is. It represents the righteousness of Christ as the sole ground or reason of the justification of a sinner. This righteousness God bestows upon men, and they accept or receive it as a thing held out or offered to them. On their accepting or receiving it, it becomes theirs in full possession, and is imputed to them, or put down to their account, and thus becomes the ground or reason from a regard to which God pardons and accepts them. Now, this accepting or receiving of Christ, and the blessings which are in Him, is identified in Scripture with the exercise of faith. And from all these scriptural truths, viewed conjointly, the conclusion unavoidably follows, that faith justifies, only because, or inasmuch as, it is the instrument or medium by which men are connected with, or united to, Christ, and by which they receive or lay hold of Him and His righteousness. This is really nothing more than expressing and embodying, in a distinct and definite statement, what the Scriptures, when we take a deliberate and combined view of all that they contain bearing upon this subject, plainly indicate as the true state of the case, the real history of the process; and the beautiful consistency and harmony pervading the whole scheme of doctrine which is thus developed, affords a confirmation of the truth and accuracy of each of its component parts. Each has its own appropriate scriptural evidence, embodying a truth obviously suggested by statements contained in Scripture, and necessary, in each instance, as the only way of bringing out distinctly and definitely the substance of what Scripture plainly appears to have been intended to teach; while all, without force or pressure, fit into, and harmonize with, each other, and, when combined together, unfold a great and consistent scheme in entire harmony with all the leading views opened up to us in Scripture with respect to the natural state and condition of men, the character of God, and the principles of His moral government, and the satisfaction and meritorious obedience of Him on whom God has laid our help, and who is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.

Men are justified freely or gratuitously by God's grace, because, from their actual state and condition by nature, they could not possibly be justified in any other way, being utterly unable to do anything either to effect or to merit their own justification. This grace of God in the justification of sinners is developed and

exercised in His giving His only-begotten Son to be their surety and their substitute, to endure the penalty, and to perform the requirements of the law, in their room and stead, and thus to work out for them an everlasting righteousness. Socinus, indeed, laboured to show that the gracious or gratuitous character of God's act in justifying was inconsistent with its being founded on, and having respect to, a vicarious satisfaction. But this misrepresentation is sufficiently exposed in the following statement: "Christ, by His obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified, and did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to His Father's justice in their behalf. Yet inasmuch as He was given by the Father for them, and His obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead, and both freely, not for anything in them, their justification is only of free grace; that both the exact justice and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners."\*

The same character of free grace pervades also the *application* of the scheme or the provision made for imparting to men individually the pardon and acceptance which the grace of God and the vicarious work of Christ have secured for them. Christ and His righteousness,—and in Him, and on the ground of His righteousness, pardon, acceptance, and eternal life,—are freely offered to them in the word of the truth of the Gospel, held out to them, and pressed upon their acceptance. Faith alone, and nothing else in them,—no working or mere obedience to law—nothing which either in itself could be meritorious, or could be easily supposed to have merit,—is the appointed mean by which men individually become united to Christ, interested in His vicarious work, partakers of the blessings which that work secured; and this faith, besides that it is God's gift, wrought in men by His gracious power, is just, in its nature or substance, trust or confidence in Christ,—an act by which men go out of themselves, renounce all confidence in anything they have done or can do, and receive or lay hold, as if with a hand, of that which has been gratuitously provided for them, and is freely offered to them. Here, then, is a great and glorious scheme, complete and harmonious in all its parts, of grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore, says the apostle, "it is of

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\* West. Conf., c. xi., sec. iii. See Larger Catechism, Qu. 71.



faith, that it might be of grace ; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed."\*

The doctrine of gratuitous justification, based solely upon the vicarious righteousness of Christ, imputed to men and received by faith alone, was the great truth which the Reformers were honoured by God to bring out from the obscurity and error in which it had been involved in the Church of Rome,—which they established from the word of God, and proclaimed openly to the world,—and by which mainly God gave them victory over the Church of Rome and the prince of darkness. This was what Luther called the article of a standing or a falling church ; and the history of the church, both before and since his time, has fully justified the propriety of the description. There has, perhaps, been no department of divine truth against which the assaults of Satan have been more assiduously directed ever since the origin of the Christian church, than the Scripture doctrine of justification ; and there has probably been no doctrine, the profession and preaching of which have more generally indicated with correctness the state of vital religion in the church in all ages. Scriptural views upon this subject, and the general prevalence of true practical godliness, have acted and reacted upon each other with palpable and invariable efficacy ;—God, whenever He was pleased to pour out His Spirit abundantly, promoting both, each by means of the other ; and Satan constantly labouring, more openly or more insidiously, to corrupt the scriptural doctrine of free justification, on the ground of Christ's righteousness imputed to men and received by faith alone, as the surest means of effecting his great object of ruining men's souls, by leading them to reject the counsel of God against themselves, and to put away from the meternal life.

*Sec. VI.—Objections to the Scriptural Doctrine.*

The scriptural doctrine of justification is substantially exhausted, so far as concerns its leading principles, by those truths which we have already explained ; at least when we add to them this, that as men receive entire immunity from all their past sins, when they first lay hold of Christ's righteousness through faith, so

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\* Rom. iv. 16.

God doth continue to forgive the subsequent sins of those who are justified, on the same grounds, and through the same process. As we have now explained the whole of the Protestant doctrine upon this subject, this may be a suitable opportunity to advert to the objections which have been adduced against it, on the ground of its alleged immoral tendency.

This great doctrine of the Reformation was assailed by Romanists at the time, and has been always assailed by them and other opponents of the truth, as unfavourable to the interests of morality, as relaxing or overturning the obligations incumbent upon men to obey the law of God, and to discharge the duties which His word imposes upon them. This is just the objection which, as the Apostle Paul intimates to us, naturally and obviously enough suggested itself against the doctrine which he taught upon the subject of justification. The objection *then* was, that he made void the law through faith; and of course the fact that the same objection, in substance, is so often urged, and with some plausibility, against the Protestant doctrine, is a presumption that it is the same which Paul taught.

It is certainly true, that those who have been most zealous in urging this objection, have not, in general, exhibited in their own character and history a very high standard of holiness, or any very deep sense of the obligations to practise it; but still the objection ought to be examined and answered upon the ground of its own merits. The common allegation of Romish writers, that the Reformers, and those who have adopted their principles, deny the necessity of an inherent righteousness, or a renovation of man's moral nature, and contend only for the necessity of an extrinsic, imputed righteousness, is an entire misrepresentation of their doctrine. Protestants, indeed, deny the necessity of an inherent righteousness or a moral renovation, as that which is the ground or basis of God's act in pardoning and accepting; but they do not deny—nay, they strenuously contend for—the necessity of its presence in all justified persons. They maintain that faith alone justifies, but not a faith which is alone—only a faith which is ever accompanied with, and produces, all other saving graces; and Bellarmine, as we have seen, admits explicitly that it is one of the characteristic differences between Protestants and Papists, that Protestants hold, “*Fidem quam dicunt solum justificare nunquam esse posse solam,*” while the Church of Rome maintains, “*Fidem*

non justificare solam sed tamen posse esse solam,"—an admission which at once overturns the ordinary Popish misrepresentations of Protestant doctrine upon this subject; misrepresentations, however, which Bellarmine himself, notwithstanding this admission, has not abstained from countenancing. Protestants have always contended that, in order that we may escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin, God requireth of us repentance unto life, as well as faith; and that repentance unto life implies a renovation of the moral nature, and consists in an actual turning from all sin unto God, with a purpose of new obedience; although they do not regard repentance as standing in the same relation to justification as faith does,—unless as it is inclusive of faith,—or as exerting any sort of causality or efficiency, even the lowest, in the matter of a sinner's justification, just because we are never said in Scripture, directly or by implication, to be justified by repentance, while we are frequently and expressly said to be justified by faith. When these considerations are kept in view, and when they are brought to bear, in their true and legitimate import, upon the state of the question, it becomes quite plain that we are fully entitled to put the objection adduced by Papists and others against the moral tendency of the doctrine of free justification by faith alone on the ground of Christ's imputed righteousness, in this form, and to discuss this as the only real point in dispute,—viz., that there can be no adequate and effectual reason to persuade and induce men to turn from sin unto God, and to submit themselves practically to Christ's authority, unless we can assure them that by doing so they will exert some causality or efficiency in procuring or obtaining for themselves the pardon of their sins, the enjoyment of God's favour, and a right to eternal life. The doctrine of the Reformers precluded them from urging this precise consideration upon men in order to persuade them to turn from sin unto God, and to submit themselves to Christ as their Lord and Master; but it left them at full liberty to employ every *other* motive or consideration that could be adduced by those who taught a different doctrine of justification.

Now, it is manifestly absurd to say that no sufficient reason can be adduced to persuade men to turn from sin, and to submit themselves to Christ's authority, unless we can assure them that, by doing so, they will exert some influence or efficiency in *procuring* or *obtaining* for themselves pardon and acceptance, so long as

we can urge upon them that God requires them to do all this,—that by refusing to do it they are provoking His righteous displeasure, and hardening themselves in a condition of guilt and misery,—and that, unless they do all this, they will not be, in point of fact, pardoned and saved, but must perish for ever. All this can be said and urged upon men in entire consistency with the Protestant doctrine of free justification through Christ's imputed righteousness; and if so, the Popish objection falls to the ground.

But this topic is important chiefly from its connection with the great general subject of the provision made in the gospel scheme for changing men's moral natures, for making them holy, and restoring them to a conformity to God's moral image; or, what is virtually the same thing, the connection between justification and sanctification, in the Protestant acceptance of these words. The Church of Rome, as we have seen, confounds justification and sanctification, using this latter word in its widest sense as including regeneration, and thus comprehending the whole process by which men are made holy. They regard justification as including both the forgiveness of sin and the renovation of man's moral nature, or, as they commonly call it, the infusing of righteousness; but then they represent the latter as, in the order of nature at least, if not of time, antecedent to the former, and as indeed the ground or reason on account of which the pardon of sin is bestowed. Protestants, in accordance with Scripture usage, regard justification and regeneration, or renovation, as distinct in themselves, and as not standing to each other in any sense in the relation of cause and effect, but only as invariably connected in point of fact, and as both traceable, as their proximate cause, to that faith by which men are united to Christ. They regard regeneration, not indeed in its more restricted and limited sense, as describing merely the first implantation of spiritual life by the Holy Ghost,—for that must be antecedent in the order of nature even to faith,—but in its more enlarged sense, as comprehending the implantation in the heart of love instead of enmity to God, and of holy principles and tendencies in place of depraved ones,—as posterior in the order of nature, though not of time, to justification, or the bestowal of pardon and acceptance.

In considering the provision made in the gospel scheme—according to the Protestant view of its nature and arrangements—for producing holiness, as including conformity to God's image



and actual obedience to His law, it is of importance to keep in mind that there are two different aspects in which holiness, in its widest sense, is presented to us in Scripture: first, as a gift bestowed on men by God,—a change effected upon them by the gracious agency of the Holy Spirit; and, secondly, as a duty or matter of obligation which God requires of them. That holiness in all its extent, as including repentance, conversion, progressive sanctification, and actual conformity of life to God's law, is represented in Scripture in both these aspects, is very manifest, and is not denied by Romanists, but only by Socinians and the grosser Pelagians. And if this be so, then both these views of it ought to be remembered and applied, as well in our speculations concerning it, as in the feelings we cherish, and the course we pursue, in regard to any matter involved in it,—each aspect of it being allowed to occupy its proper place, and to exert its appropriate influence. I have no doubt that unfavourable impressions of the moral tendency of the scriptural doctrine of justification have been encouraged by overlooking this twofold aspect of holiness, or conformity of heart and life to God's law, and regarding it chiefly, if not exclusively, as a duty which God requires of us. When it is viewed as a grace or gift bestowed upon and wrought in us, then we have just to consider what provision God has made for imparting it, and what the way and manner in which He communicates it to men individually. Now, in *this* aspect of the matter, the scriptural representation of the case is this,—that, from men's natural state and condition, it is indispensably necessary, in order to their final happiness, that a change be effected both upon their state and condition judicially in relation to God and His law, and upon their moral nature, principles, and tendencies; that God has provided for effecting both these changes, by giving His own Son to be the surety and substitute of His people; and that He communicates to men individually both these gifts by uniting them to Christ through the agency or instrumentality of faith on their part, which He works in them. It was necessary that both these changes should be effected, that both these gifts should be bestowed. God has made effectual provision for imparting and securing both. They are both found in Christ, when men are united to Him. They are both effected or conferred, as to their immediate or proximate cause, through that faith by which this union to Christ is brought about. The two

things cannot be separated, because God has made equally certain provision for effecting and bestowing both, and has clearly revealed it to us in His word as a fundamental principle of His unchangeable arrangements, that wherever He confers the one He always confers the other. They are both equally God's gifts; and, according to the arrangements which He has established in the covenant of grace, and which He has revealed in His word, they both flow with an equal certainty or necessity from union to Christ, and from faith in Him.

Now, in this aspect of the case, there can be no possible ground for entertaining any suspicion whatever of the moral tendency of the scriptural doctrine of justification; for the substance of the truth we hold upon the point is this,—that God made equally certain and effectual provision for changing men's state, and for changing their character; for securing that every one who is pardoned and accepted, shall also, at the same time, be born again, be renewed in the spirit of his mind, be created again in Christ Jesus unto good works. The differences between the Protestant and the Popish doctrine upon the subject are these,—that the Papists regard both changes as comprehended under the one word justification, and represent the change of state as posterior, and standing in a relation of causal dependence, in some sense, to the change of character; while the Protestants reject these views. Now, even conceding, for the sake of argument, that these Popish representations of the matter were in accordance with Scripture, or that there was equal ground for regarding them as scriptural as the Protestant doctrine, what we wish to observe is, that there is no appearance of their possessing any advantage or superiority, in point of moral tendency, in the aspect of the case we are at present considering; and for this plain reason, that they do not appear to contribute in the least to increase the certainty, necessity, and invariableness of the connection between the two changes or gifts. God has resolved to bestow both, He has made effectual provision for bestowing both, on all on whom He bestows either; and He will just as certainly and as invariably carry this arrangement into effect, whatever may be the name or names under which He has classed them, and whatever may be the order, either of time or of causal dependence, in which He has fixed them with reference to each other. No suspicion can legitimately attach to the moral tendency

of any system of doctrine upon this subject, and with reference to the aspect in which we are at present considering it, unless it deny, directly or by implication, either that God has established an invariable connection between His two gifts of a change of state and a change of character, or that He has made certain and effectual provision for bestowing both on all on whom He bestows either; and as the Protestant doctrine is just as far from denying either of these positions as the Popish one, it is at least equally safe and wholesome in its moral tendency.

It is only when this view of justification and sanctification, or forgiveness and renovation, as equally God's gifts,—which He has made effectual provision for bestowing upon all for whom they were intended,—is kept out of view, and when man's attention is turned solely to the other aspect of regeneration and sanctification, as being simply duties which God requires of us, that the common allegations about the moral tendency of the Protestant doctrine of justification can be invested with anything like plausibility. It is certain that repentance, conversion, growing holiness of nature, and practical obedience to God's law, are all duties which God requires of us, as well as gifts which He bestows. And when we regard them as duties, and are called upon to vindicate the Protestant doctrine of justification from the charge of being unfavourable or injurious to the interests of morality, we may be expected to show that that doctrine leaves *the obligation* of these duties untouched, and leaves also full scope for our addressing to men such considerations as ought, in right reason, to persuade and constrain them to perform them. We might, indeed, take our stand upon the former view of the matter,—to the effect, at least, of throwing the *onus probandi* upon our opponents,—and maintain that, since we hold that God has established a certain and invariable connection between justification and renovation, it is incumbent upon them to show that our doctrine in regard to the one relaxes the obligation of the other, and deprives us of the capacity of addressing to men considerations which, in right reason, should, as motives, persuade and constrain them to repent and be converted, to enter into and to continue in Christ's service, and to persevere ever thereafter in walking as He walked, and in obeying His law. But there is no occasion to contest this preliminary point, or to confine ourselves so rigidly within the range of what is logically imperative; for there is really no diffi-

culty in proving that the Protestant doctrine of justification leaves the obligations of men to holiness of heart and life in all its extent, at least, untouched, and leaves us quite sufficiently strong and powerful considerations—nay, affords us the strongest and most powerful of all considerations—to persuade men, on the fullest and most rational grounds, to do all that God requires of them, and to perform all the duties which He has imposed upon them.

In briefly illustrating this position, we may first advert to what are the motives and considerations which the Romanists can bring to bear upon men, but from the use of which Protestants, by their doctrine, are precluded. We cannot, and we dare not, tell men, as the Church of Rome does, that fear, hope, penitence, and love must exist in men, as well as faith, before justification, and that all these virtues existing in men prepare and dispose them to receive justification; and still less can we tell them, as most Romish writers do, and without contradicting the Council of Trent, that these virtues merit justification *ex congruo*. And neither can we tell them, as the Council of Trent and all Romish writers do, that the good works which men perform after they are justified, merit or deserve increase of grace and eternal life *ex condigno*. We cannot bring *these* considerations to bear upon men, because we believe them to be false, and are assured upon this ground that they are not fitted to serve any good and useful purpose. Nay, we are persuaded that they contradict or pervert the provision which God has made and revealed for promoting the holiness and happiness of men, and therefore tend, in so far as they are believed and acted on, to injure men's spiritual welfare. But, while we cannot employ these considerations, we have motives enough of the most powerful and constraining kind to persuade them to enter upon, and to persevere and abound in, all holiness and new obedience.

In considering this subject, we are entitled to assume that men believe in the divine authority of the whole word of God, and admit their obligation to be guided in all things by its statements and requirements; and that they believe and honestly apply, according to their true nature and tendency, the Protestant doctrines with respect to the causes and means of justification, and the position and circumstances in which justified men are placed. We are entitled to assume this, because really the question at



issue is just this,—How will a man who, receiving the Bible as the word of God, believes, on its authority as he supposes, the Protestant doctrine of justification, be in right reason affected, as to his sense of obligation with respect to obedience to God's law, and the strength of the motives that should constrain him to discharge this obligation? And upon this assumption, it is plain that, in reason and consistency, the man will just receive and submit to all that Scripture sets forth concerning the perfection and unchangeableness of the divine law, the obligations of holiness, and the hatefulnes and danger of sin. Men may receive the Protestant doctrine of justification, and yet hold all that Romanists or any others believe to be taught in Scripture upon these points. There is nothing in that doctrine that, either directly or by implication, tends to affect injuriously men's views as to their relation to God, their obligations to comply with all His requirements, and the connection which He has established between holiness and happiness. Romanists allege, that while Protestants may speculatively admit all this upon the authority of Scripture, yet that the tendency of their doctrine of justification is to weaken their sense of the truth and reality of this principle, and thus to lead them practically to disregard it. But this is a mere random assertion, which has no definite or satisfactory foundation to rest upon. The Protestant doctrine not only accords with all that Scripture says with respect to the perfection and unchangeableness of the law, God's determination to maintain its honour inviolate, and to manifest fully His love of righteousness and His hatred of sin; but it is fitted to bring out all these views in the clearest and most impressive light, to bring them home most powerfully both to the understanding and the hearts of men. The obligation of faith, fear, hope, love, and penitence, remain unaffected by the denial of their preparative, dispositive, meritorious efficacy in the matter of justification. It continues true, that these are all duties which God imperatively requires of all men who have sinned, and who desire to escape from the consequences of their sins,—duties which He has placed them under an absolute and indefeasible obligation to perform,—duties which they are all bound to discharge, at once from a regard to God's authority and to their own best interests.

So far as concerns the whole process of turning from sin unto God, of embracing Christ as our Saviour, and submitting to Him

as our Lord and Master, any consideration that goes to establish its *obligation and necessity*, and that is fitted to persuade and constrain men to do what is incumbent upon them in the matter, remains in full force, unaffected by any particular views as to the precise way in which God deals with us when we come to Him through Christ, or as to the precise grounds or causes of the treatment which, in these circumstances, He bestows upon us. It still continues equally true, upon the Protestant as upon the Romish doctrine of justification, that God requires of us faith and repentance, and requires them of us as indispensably necessary to our escaping His wrath and curse due to us for our sins, though not as exerting any causality or efficiency in procuring or obtaining for us pardon and acceptance, except instrumentally in the case of faith; and it is a part of the Protestant, though not of the Romish doctrine, that the faith which justifies necessarily and invariably produces graces and good works. And after men have been once justified and regenerated, the case continues very much the same as to obligation in persevering and abounding in all holy obedience. As the obligation of the law continues unchanged with respect to men in their natural condition, though it was impossible for them to procure or obtain justification by deeds of law, so, as our Confession says,\* “it doth for ever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof,” though they “be not under the law, as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified or condemned.”

With respect to progressive holiness and the performance of good works, the only consideration competent to Papists, from the use of which Protestants by their doctrine are excluded, is, that justified men, by the good works which they perform, do truly and properly *merit* increase of grace and eternal life. Now, this is a consideration which does not properly affect men’s *obligation* to perform good works, in the stricter and higher sense of the word,—their obligation, as determined by their relation to God and a sense of duty; it can operate merely as a motive, and a motive addressed to the lower and more selfish principles of men’s nature. And even with reference to this lower class of motives, Protestants are not precluded, as we may afterwards have occasion to explain, from holding the good works of justified men to be re-

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\* West Conf., c. xix., secs. v. vi.

wardable, though not meritorious. The loss of this motive, then, independently altogether of the question as to the truth or falsehood of the doctrine on which it is founded, is a matter of no real moment; and it is far more than compensated by the great additional force and impressiveness which the Protestant doctrine of justification gives to any consideration that can either enforce an *obligation*, or afford a constraining *motive* to persevere and abound in all holy obedience. A man who has been brought into a justified state, and who, in realizing his present position,—in looking back upon the process by which he has been brought into it,—contemplates the whole matter in the light which is shed upon it by the great Protestant doctrine which we have been endeavouring to explain, must have a deeper sense of his obligations to love God, to honour and serve Christ, and to run in the way of His commandments, than could be produced in any other way; and must be brought under the influence of motives which alone are fitted to constrain him to live, not unto himself, but unto Him that died for him, and that rose again, and to adorn the doctrine of his God and Saviour in all things. The exposition and enforcement of these obligations and motives, and of the grounds on which they rest, constitutes the preaching of the truth as it is in Jesus, in so far as it is directed to the object of building up God's people in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation. And the efficacy of Protestant views of the present condition of justified men, and of the whole process by which they have been brought into it, in deepening their sense of these obligations, and in impressing these motives upon their minds, must surely be abundantly evident to every one who, whether he believes the Protestant doctrine or not, will just realize what that doctrine is, and what are the history and condition of a justified man when contemplated in the light in which that doctrine represents them.

This is indeed so evident, that the fairer and more candid Romanists have usually founded their allegations as to the immoral tendency of Protestant doctrine, not so much upon our views as to the grounds or causes of justification, and the way and manner in which men are brought into a justified state, as upon the views held by the Reformers and by Calvinists on what is commonly called by us the perseverance of the saints, but what Romish divines usually call the inamissibility of justice or righteousness. We do not mean to discuss this doctrine at pre-

sent, as it more properly belongs to the controversy between the Calvinists and the Arminians, and can be rightly explained and defended only in connection with the doctrine of predestination, or election to life. I would only remark, that even this doctrine of the inadmissibility of justice, or the certainty of final perseverance in a state of grace, when men have once been admitted into it, does not, in right reason, either affect the obligations under which justified men lie, or impair the motives which operate upon them to abound and to persevere in all holy obedience; that *the very thing* in which they persevere, is just righteousness and holiness; and that all legitimate tendency to abuse or pervert the doctrine is checked by the principle which Scripture so fully sanctions,—viz., that, if men continue for a length of time habitually careless or indifferent about growing in holiness and abounding in good works, the only fair inference from this state of things is—not, indeed, that they have lost righteousness, or fallen from a state of grace, but that they have never yet been brought into a state of grace,—that they are still subject to God's wrath and curse, and should still inquire what they must do to be saved.

These brief hints may afford some assistance, not only in dealing with the leading objection against the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone, on the ground of Christ's righteousness imputed, based upon its alleged moral tendency, but also in explaining the connection between the doctrines of justification and sanctification; and in practically applying the scriptural doctrine of justification to the purpose of promoting the interests of practical godliness, of leading justified men to be ever growing in righteousness and holiness, and to be increasingly showing forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvellous light.

*Sec. VII.—The Forgiveness of Post-baptismal Sins.*

The general view of the subject of justification taught by the Council of Trent, in so far as we have hitherto explained it, is applied by Romanists only to the justification of persons who have not been baptized in infancy, but who have been brought to the knowledge of Christ and Christianity after they have grown up to years of understanding. According to the doctrine of the



Church of Rome, every infant in baptism is justified,—*i.e.*, is forgiven and regenerated, or freed wholly both from the guilt and the power of original sin,—a doctrine opposed to the word of God, most injurious in its practical bearing upon the spiritual welfare of men, but well fitted to enhance the importance of the outward ordinance, and of its official administrators. With respect to those who are not baptized till after they are grown up, the Church of Rome requires in them the possession of the seven virtues, so often referred to as existing *before* they are pardoned and regenerated, and as *at least* preparing and disposing them for justification. The deliverance from the guilt and the power of all their past sins, original and actual, in the case of all adults so prepared and disposed, is as full and complete as the deliverance from the guilt and the power of original sin granted to all infants, without any preparation in baptism. But then the Church of Rome puts the forgiveness of all the *subsequent* sins of both these classes, or of all post-baptismal sin, as they call it, upon a different footing, and introduces into this department some new principles and arrangements, which are opposed to the word of God, but admirably adapted to promote the general designs of Popery, and the interests of the priesthood.

It is the doctrine of the Church of Rome, that no mortal sin, committed after baptism, is forgiven to any man, except in and through the sacrament of penance,—*i.e.*, without confession, absolution, and satisfaction,—or *unless* it be confessed to a priest,—unless he pronounce the words of absolution,—and unless the penitent perform the satisfaction imposed by him; though, as to the necessity of this last condition, there is no formal decision of the church, and it is a subject of controversy among Romish writers. The sacrament of penance, both in its general complex character, and with reference to the particular parts of which it is composed, is evidently a mere fabrication, having no appearance of foundation in Scripture; but it belongs to the head of sacramental justification, to which I shall afterwards advert as a general topic of discussion. My present subject leads me to advert only to one feature of the Romish doctrine upon this point,—*viz.*, that the forgiveness of post-baptismal sin, conveyed by the absolution of the priest in the sacrament of penance, is not so full and complete as that conveyed in baptism. The absolution of the sacrament of penance conveys, indeed, full

immunity from any liability to the *eternal* punishment which the sin deserved, but leaves the penitent exposed to a temporal punishment, which God must still inflict, and the penitent must still bear, on account of that sin. There is no doubt, or room for discussion, as to what the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this point is, and therefore we need not adduce quotations.\* Let us briefly consider what this doctrine really involves, as it is usually drawn out and applied; for Romanists have certainly made the most of it, and turned it to very good account.

The first point is, that when the guilt of post-baptismal sin is remitted in the sacrament of penance, so that men are exempted from liability to the eternal punishment which the sin deserved, they still remain liable to a temporal punishment to be inflicted by God on account of it. Now, this doctrine naturally suggests the question, How, or in what way, is this temporal punishment inflicted by God and endured by them; or how is it otherwise disposed of, so that those to whom it attached are no longer subject to any liability to suffer, but are admissible into the enjoyment of perfect happiness? If the general doctrine, that a temporal punishment remains due, after the proper guilt and liability to eternal punishment are taken away, be admitted, the most natural answer to the question suggested would be, that God inflicted, and that men endured, this temporal punishment, in the providential trials and afflictions of this life. Accordingly, the Church of Rome teaches,—as her general doctrine upon this subject plainly required of her,—that the trials and afflictions of justified men—for, of course, it is to them only that the whole subject applies—are strictly and properly penal; and that they thus constitute, at least partly, the infliction and the endurance of this temporal punishment.

This, however, was leaving the matter far too much in the hands of God in His providence, without the intervention of the church and the priest, and was not much fitted to work upon men's fears. Accordingly, the Church of Rome has invented purgatory, in the fire of which men may, and of course many must, endure after death what may *remain* of the temporal punishment due to their mortal sins; and of the whole punishment—for it is only

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\* The most direct and explicit | den., sess. vi., cap. xiv., can. 30; and  
authorities on the point are: Con. Tri- | sess. xiv., cap. viii., can. 12 and 13.

temporal—due to their venial sins. This is rather alarming, and does not seem to comport very well with the representations given us in Scripture of the conditions, obligations, and prospects of justified men. But Popery is very skilful in its provisions for affording comfort, as well as for inspiring terror. Accordingly, the church teaches that there is a way in which this temporal punishment, remaining due by men, may be disposed of, or got quit of, without their actually enduring it,—that they may satisfy the claims of God's justice and law in the matter by a different process; and this brings in their doctrine of human satisfaction. It is this, that men, by various works which they can perform,—especially prayers, fastings, and almsgivings,—can and do make *satisfaction or compensation to God* for the temporal punishment remaining due to them, and thus escape the necessity of enduring it. Praying, fasting, and almsgiving, are thus invested with a penal character; they are represented as the endurance of punishment for sin; in short, as standing in the same relation, and effecting the same result, with reference to the temporal punishment due to sin, as the sufferings and death of Christ do with reference to its eternal punishment. Men can render satisfaction to God for the temporal punishment due to their sins, by *voluntarily* undertaking and performing extraordinary acts of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving; but it is much safer, at least for the mass of men, just to perform exactly the penances, or penal endurances,—*i.e.*, the prayers, fastings, and almsdeeds *enjoined* by the priest at absolution, as he of course is the best judge of the amount of suffering or endurance in these ways that may be necessary to make satisfaction to the divine law.

This doctrine of human satisfaction is a very important addition to the general scheme of Popish teaching, as to the way in which men are to be exempted from the consequences of their sins. But we have not yet attained to a full view of it. As a man, by his prayers, fastings, and almsdeeds, may make satisfaction or compensation to God for the temporal punishment due to his own sins, so, by the same means, he can make satisfaction to God for the temporal punishment due to the *sins of others*,—“*ut unus posset pro altero satisfacere*,”—“*alterius nomine possunt quod Deo debetur persolvere.*”\* As the Church of Rome, while

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\* Catech. Trident., P. ii., cap. v., Quæst. lxxii.

explicitly teaching this general doctrine, has not imposed any restriction upon the capacity, or the right, of one man to make satisfaction in the room of another, and to transfer the benefit of his satisfactory endurances to whom he pleases, the practice, which prevails in some Popish countries, of men and women making a livelihood by hiring themselves to perform vicarious prayings, as a satisfaction for the sins of others, is the natural and legitimate result of the authorized teaching of the church. Still, however, even yet, the system laboured under two defects: first, men who needed some assistance in making satisfaction for the temporal punishment due to their sins, might often find a difficulty in getting substitutes to satisfy in their room; and, secondly, even if substitutes could be got without great difficulty, *the church* might not derive much direct benefit from these private and personal transactions, in the way of transferring satisfaction from one man to another. To remedy at once these two evils, she provided a great treasure of satisfactions, and opened a public market for the dispensation of them, that men might be put to no great inconvenience in obtaining a supply of vicarious satisfactions, and that, being indebted for it to the church, they might be reasonably called upon for due and suitable expressions of their obligations to her. Thus at length we have arrived at indulgences, which are just the communication to men of satisfactions made by others, and deposited, under the Pope's control, in what the Council of Trent calls "the heavenly treasures of the church;" the certain effect of this communication being, that those to whom it is made are, in consequence, exempted, *pro tanto*, from the necessity of either satisfying for, or actually enduring, the temporal punishment which otherwise God would have inflicted upon them. And when I have stated further, that, according to the doctrine of the Church of Rome, indulgences not only exempt men, *pro tanto*, from the necessity of personal suffering or satisfaction in this life, but likewise shorten the duration or mitigate the severity of their sufferings in the fire of purgatory, I think I have introduced all the leading features of the doctrine of the Romanists upon this subject.

Now, this is a magnificent and well-compact scheme, displaying great inventive genius, profound knowledge of human nature, and admirable skill in contrivance and adaptation. Each one of the principles or doctrines in the series, taken by itself, is fitted to obscure and pervert the scriptural account of the provi-



sion made for pardoning men's sins, and saving them from the punishment their sins deserve; and all of them separately, and the whole conjointly, are necessary to be established, as the foundation of the doctrine of indulgences, which may be regarded as constituting the climax of a long and intricate series of anti-scriptural and most dangerous errors. If any one link in the series fail, the doctrine of indulgences falls to the ground; and conversely, if the doctrine of indulgences be thoroughly established, it will be able to afford support to all these positions, which are virtually involved in it. This illustrates how naturally the exposure of indulgences led, in the hands of Luther, and under the guidance of God's word and Spirit, to the full exposition of the doctrine of a free and complete justification through faith in the righteousness of Christ. The doctrine of indulgences, when analysed and investigated, leads us back, step by step, through all the various questions which we have stated (of course, in the inverse order to that which we have pursued), and thus brings us to the very threshold of the Scripture doctrine of justification; while that great doctrine, on the other hand, once clearly seen, and steadily and faithfully applied, at once sweeps away all these errors, and all the practices and arrangements, all the fraud and imposture, which have been based upon them.

I do not mean to enter on any detailed refutation of this gigantic system of heresy and fraud, as my object, in referring to it, was chiefly to illustrate how the Church of Rome follows out her doctrines in their practical applications, and to point out the connection subsisting among the different steps in the series; and thus to exhibit at once a specimen of the general policy of the Church of Rome, in providing so fully, by the same processes, for Satan's object, the ruining of men's souls, by leading them to build upon a false foundation, and for the priest's object, the enslaving of the consciences of the people; and a specimen of the kind of proof on which many of her doctrines and practices are based. Not one of the different positions which constitute the steps in the series we have described, can be established by anything like satisfactory scriptural evidence. Every one of them can be proved to be opposed to the teaching of the word of God, —some of them, indeed, to be in direct collision with fundamental scriptural principles respecting the vicarious satisfaction of Christ, and the way of a sinner's salvation. There is one point

especially to be noticed,—viz., that while all these positions, when viewed conjointly, form a well-contrived and compacted system, yet that not one of them, even if proved, affords any direct evidence in support of the succeeding one; and that, therefore, each of them must be established by its own distinct and appropriate scriptural proof.

I need not dwell upon the illustration of this position; but there is a general observation of some importance in the Popish controversy which is suggested by it, and to which it may be worth while to advert. There are several of the leading doctrines of the Popish system which, in the absence of all direct scriptural evidence in support of them, depend for their authority upon the establishment of a series of positions, all of which must be distinctly and separately proved, and the failure in the proof of any one of which overthrows the whole Popish teaching upon the point. Now, it is common, in such cases, for the defenders of Popery to select that one of the various positions in support of which they think that the largest amount of plausible scriptural evidence can be adduced, and then to assume that the proof of this one separate position, of itself, establishes the general conclusion. It has been shown, for instance, by Dr Isaac Barrow, in his great work on the Supremacy of the Pope, that, in order to establish that doctrine, seven distinct and independent positions must be proved, each of them being necessary for the ultimate result; while Romanists scarcely undertake to establish them all, and dwell almost exclusively upon two or three of them, in support of which they think they can adduce something that is plausible. The invocation of saints, in like manner, in the absence of all direct scriptural evidence bearing upon the point itself, can be based only upon a series of positions, each of which must be established; and yet Romish writers, in discussing this subject, often talk as if they expected that the proof of this one position,—viz., that the saints in heaven offer up prayers for men on earth,—were to be received as *probatio probata* of all that the Church of Rome teaches and practises regarding it. So, in the series of positions which we have described with reference to the forgiveness of post-baptismal sin,—every one of which must be proved by its own distinct and appropriate evidence, before the Romish doctrine of indulgences can be established,—there are several which they scarcely attempt or pretend to prove from

Scripture ; while they seem to expect that the proof they adduce in support of one or two of them, shall be received as proving them all, and establishing the important conclusion which hangs upon them. Among these various positions, the one perhaps on which they are fondest of enlarging in argument, because they think they can most plausibly defend it from Scripture, is this,—that the trials and afflictions of justified men are strictly penal in their character ; and as this position is really not destitute of some plausible scriptural evidence, it may be proper briefly to advert to it.

It is conceded by Protestants, that all the sufferings which men endure are in some sense punishments of sin,—traceable to sin and demerit as their source or cause. It is further conceded, that the Scripture represents justified and righteous men as bringing trials and afflictions upon themselves by their sins ; afflictions which, it is intimated in Scripture, are in some measure regulated, both as to their peculiar character and their severity, by the sins of which such men have been guilty. Now, these concessions, which Scripture plainly enough requires, might not unreasonably be regarded as sufficient to establish the conclusion, that the providential afflictions of righteous men are truly and properly penal, *had we no further information given us in Scripture upon the subject.* But the conclusion is one which important scriptural principles, and clear scriptural statements, *prevent* us from receiving. The whole tenor of the scriptural representations with respect to the nature and consequences of forgiveness, the state and condition of justified men, and the principles which regulate all God's dealings with them, precludes the idea that they are liable to, or that they, in point of fact, suffer at God's hand, inflictions of a strictly penal character. "There is *now* no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,"—no liability to punishment. Their sins have been entirely blotted out, and are remembered no more against them. They have been received finally and unchangeably into the enjoyment of God's favour. They have been adopted as children into His family ; and the one object to which all God's views concerning them, and all His dealings toward them, are directed, is to promote their welfare by making them more meet for the full enjoyment of His own presence. He has virtually laid aside, so far as they are concerned, the character of a Judge, and assumed that of a Father. And in

accordance with these general principles, He is to be regarded, when He sends them trials and sufferings, not as inflicting punishment, strictly and properly so called, but merely as chastening correcting, disciplining them in the way He sees best fitted to promote their true welfare. He is not exercising His *justitia vindicatrix* in merely testifying His hatred against sin, by simply inflicting pain upon the sinner. His only object is to promote and secure the welfare of His children. The very idea of a penal infliction, properly so called, is that of suffering inflicted for the purpose of occasioning misery to the object of the infliction, because he has deserved it, and because it is intended that the ordinary course of justice and of law should take effect upon him, or,—as it has been defined in the discussion of this subject,—“*vindicta propria est quando malum quod alicui infligitur, non in bonum, sed in malum ejus infligitur.*” And punishment, or penal infliction, in this, its strict and proper sense, is wholly inapplicable to any of God’s dealings with His own people.†

In short, we must include the whole of what Scripture teaches upon this subject, and embody it, if possible, in one consistent and harmonious doctrine. We cannot, in consistency with Scripture, maintain that God’s dealings with justified men, even when He sends them trials and afflictions, are strictly and properly penal, or directed to the object of merely inflicting upon them suffering, because they have deserved it by their sin. And there is no great difficulty in reconciling this principle with those scriptural views upon which the Popish argument is based, and from which their conclusion is deduced; while that conclusion cannot be reconciled with this principle, and, indeed, flatly contradicts it. All suffering is, in its general character, a punishment on account of sin; but this is not the only character it bears,—the only relation it sustains; and therefore it may not be in this character that it is inflicted by God upon justified men. And as to the relation,—plainly indicated in some instances described in Scripture of God’s dealing with His people,—between the peculiar character and degree of the suffering inflicted upon them, and the sin which in some sense produced or occasioned it, this admits without difficulty of another solution besides that of the suffering being strictly and

\* Ames. Bellarm. Enervat., tom iii., pp. 231, 232. Oxon. 1629.

† Calvin. Instit., Lib. iii., c. iv.,

sec. 30 to the end, and generally on this whole subject, c. iv. and v.



properly penal. The character and degree of the suffering inflicted may have been regulated or determined by the preceding sin, while yet the intended bearing and influence of the suffering might be wholly prospective, and not retrospective; and this upon two grounds: first, the very best thing now, for the real good of the individual who has sinned,—the first and most indispensable thing for his future welfare,—may be, that he should be brought under the influence of right impressions with respect to the sin which he has committed, and learn, for his future guidance, the lessons which it is fitted to teach; and, secondly, the sin which he has committed may be a fair measure or index of what he now needs,—of what is truly, in the actual circumstances in which he is placed, best fitted to promote his real welfare, and may thus, *de facto*, regulate the character and degree of the suffering inflicted,—even though this suffering, in its intended bearings and results, has a regard only prospectively and correctively to future good, and not retrospectively and penally to past sin. On these grounds, we think it can be shown that there is nothing in Scripture which necessarily requires us to admit the position (which was strenuously opposed by all the Reformers), that the providential sufferings or afflictions of righteous men are strictly and properly penal; while, on the other hand, a full view of all that Scripture teaches upon the subject compels us to believe that it is not as strict and proper punishments that they are inflicted,—although most certainly they are both fitted and intended, when viewed in connection with the sin that preceded and occasioned them, to produce profound humility and self-abasement, and to lead to unceasing watchfulness and waiting upon God.\*

The first and fundamental position in the series we have described,—that on which, as a basis, the whole series depends,—viz., that with respect to post-baptismal sin there is a *reatus pœnæ*, as distinguished from a *reatus culpæ*, or that a temporal punishment remains due after the proper guilt and consequent liability to eternal punishment have been taken away in the sacrament of penance,—rests wholly upon the proof adduced, that the providen-

\* There is an Antinomian, as well as a Popish, error upon this point to be guarded against. Some Antinomians have maintained that God sees no sin in His people, and does not even

correct or chasten them for their sins.

Vide Burgess on Justification, Part i., Lec. 4, 5, 6; Gillespie's Miscellany Questions.

tial sufferings of justified and regenerate men are strictly and properly penal. This first position, asserting a distinction, with reference to post-baptismal sins, between the *reatus culpæ* and the *reatus pænæ*, has not in itself, as a general doctrine, any distinct, direct scriptural evidence; and Papists scarcely pretend that it has, while Protestants undertake to show, not only that it is wholly unsanctioned by Scripture, but that it is opposed to clear scriptural statements, and to most important scriptural principles. Papists profess to prove from Scripture that the providential sufferings of righteous men are truly penal inflictions; and from *that* they draw the general conclusion, that temporal punishment remains due by them, after their proper guilt, or *culpa*, or liability to eternal punishment, has been taken away. It is not by any means clear or certain that the conclusion is well founded in *all its extent*, even though the premises should be proved or conceded. But it is unnecessary to dispute this; for the Reformers proved, not only that there is no satisfactory evidence in Scripture that the providential sufferings of righteous men are penal, but that Scripture, when its whole teaching upon the subject is carefully and deliberately examined in combination, contains abundant proof that they are *not* possessed of a strictly and properly penal character. Thus the sole foundation in argument of the great Popish principle about a temporal punishment remaining due after the liability to eternal punishment has been removed by the sacrament of penance, is overturned, and, of course, carries with it the whole system of heresy, fraud, and imposture that is based upon it.

The other parts of the system, besides being left without any foundation to rest upon, can be, each of them, singly and separately disproved by satisfactory scriptural evidence. Human satisfactions for, or instead of, punishment due to sin, and these either personal or vicarious, rendered either by the sinners themselves or by others in their room, and rendered either in this life upon earth, or in the next in purgatory; an inexhaustible treasure of vicarious satisfactions upon earth, and a place of punishment somewhere in the neighbourhood of hell, and both under the control of the Pope; the penalty of the prayers and the almsdeeds, as well as of the providential sufferings, of righteous men, and their actual endurance of punishment for a time in a future world;—all these are palpably opposed to most important truths plainly taught us in the sacred Scriptures, and altogether constitute the

most marvellous system of falsehood and fraud that has ever been invented.

We are too apt to look upon the Popish purgatory and indulgences *merely* as fraudulent contrivances for enslaving men's consciences, and swindling them out of their money; but there is something far deeper and more destructive about them than this view of their character exhibits. They imply and involve the whole system of erroneous doctrine which we have briefly described. That system of doctrine may have produced purgatory and indulgences, or they may have produced it, or, what is more probable, both may have acted and reacted upon each other. But, however this may have been historically, it is certain that purgatory and indulgences require all these gross corruptions of the scriptural doctrine of the forgiveness of sins. They tend greatly to strengthen and confirm those corruptions, and to give them a deeper hold of men's minds. In this way they serve as fully and as effectually the purposes of Satan as of the priesthood, and tend directly to endanger men's eternal welfare, by producing and confirming erroneous conceptions of the scheme which God has devised and revealed for the salvation of sinners, and thus leading them to exclude themselves from the benefit of its free and gracious provisions. This is a general feature of the whole Popish system.

*Sec. VIII.—The Merit of Good Works.*

We have explained and illustrated the way in which the Church of Rome has drawn out its doctrine upon the subject of justification into most important practical applications, so far as concerns the topic of satisfaction and forgiveness of sin,—laying by this process a deep foundation for human satisfaction to God's law,—for purgatory and indulgences. We have now to advert to the manner in which Romanists regulate the practical application of their general doctrine, in its bearing upon the subject of *merit*, and the procuring of the divine favour.

The doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject is this:—that, after men are pardoned and regenerated in baptism, they can, through divine grace, obey the whole law of God, so as not to fall into any mortal sin,—which is practically, under the Popish system, the same as into any sin, for venial sin is usually

so explained as to be really no sin ; that, while they can thus abstain from doing anything which really deserves God's wrath, they are able, by their good works, to merit from God increase of grace and eternal life ; that they can even do more, in the way of meritorious performance, than is necessary to escape from God's wrath, and to procure anything that may be needful for their own happiness ; and that their works of supererogation, as they are called, may be available for the benefit of others. We have already seen that the Church of Rome *underrated* the magnitude and importance of the change effected upon men's state or legal condition when their sins are pardoned ; we now see how greatly she *overrates* the change effected upon their character and capacities of obeying the divine law, when they are regenerated. The assertion of their liability to a temporal punishment for their post-baptismal sins after their guilt is remitted,—so far as concerns their desert of eternal punishment, and of the strict and proper penalty of the providential trials and sufferings to which they are subjected,—implies an underrating of the fulness and completeness of the pardon or forgiveness which God bestows for Christ's sake, and of the blessed and filial relation into which justified persons are brought ; while the assertion of their ability to keep the whole law, and to perform good works that are truly and properly meritorious,—nay, even works of supererogation,—implies an overrating of the completeness of the sanctification wrought upon men when they become the subjects of divine grace. This difference illustrates an important general feature in the character of the Popish system of theology, with respect to the way of a sinner's salvation,—viz., a tendency to throw into the background what, from the nature of the case, must be God's, and God's only, and to raise into prominence that which, though it is admitted to be in some sense God's, is also, in some sense, man's, and which, therefore, man will be able and disposed to ascribe to himself, and to rest upon as his own. Forgiveness is God's gift, and cannot well, from the nature of the case, be represented in any other light. Men *might*, indeed, be able to do something to induce God to bestow it upon them, or might be in some measure indebted for it, in some sense, to the good offices and kind intervention of a fellow-creature ; and there is much in the Popish system of doctrine and practice fitted and intended to foster both these notions. But the Church of Rome has not



ventured very directly and explicitly to propound them. On the other hand, holiness, obedience, and good works, though ascribed in a general way to God's grace and the operation of His Spirit, are also qualities and doings of men themselves, which exist in them, and are, in some sense, theirs,—as possessed or effected by them. And there is thus a ground on which, though magnifying their importance and value, men may be led to form high ideas of their own worth and excellence, and to rely much upon themselves in matters connected with God and eternity.

We have already expounded two important principles taught by all the Reformers, and anathematized by the Council of Trent, and forming a sort of connecting link between the subject of original sin and that of justification. The principles were these: First, that there is nothing in men by nature, and before they are justified and regenerated, but what is sinful, wholly and altogether sinful, and deserving of God's wrath; and, second, that there is nothing in men's character and actions, so long as they continue on earth, even after they are forgiven and regenerated, which is not stained or polluted with sinful imperfection,—which has not about it something that deserves God's displeasure, and that, viewed in itself, might justly expose men to punishment. These two positions, if they are really taught in the word of God, as we have shown they are, overturn from the foundation the leading principles on which the whole Popish doctrine of justification is based. It is with the second of them only that we have now to do, in its bearing upon what Papists commonly call the second justification, or the *justificatio justi*, as distinguished from the *justificatio impii*, by which men who have been pardoned and regenerated procure additional supplies of grace, both pardoning and sanctifying, and thus become more righteous and more happy. If it be true that all the actions, even of justified and regenerate men, have something sinful about them, or are stained with some sinful imperfection, it is quite plain that men cannot, as the Church of Rome teaches, render perfect obedience to the divine law; and that their good works cannot, as the Council of Trent affirmed they do, truly and properly deserve or merit increase of grace and eternal life.

The merit of good works was an invention of the schoolmen; for though the fathers often applied the word *merit* to the actions of regenerate men,—and though, of course, Papists quote the pas-

sages in which this term is so applied, in support of the doctrine of their Church,—it has been proved by Protestant writers, that “to merit,” is commonly used by them merely in the vague and general sense of “to procure or obtain,” and not as conveying the Popish notion of meriting or deserving, in a strict or proper sense. The schoolmen asserted the merit of good works in a higher and more exact sense than that in which it had been ascribed to them by the fathers, and indulged in many intricate and useless speculations about the nature and ground of merit, and the qualities and circumstances of actions necessary and sufficient to make them truly and properly meritorious; and, in consequence, a good deal of matter of this sort has been introduced into the discussion of this subject as carried on between Protestants and Papists. Protestants contend, and most reasonably, that they are exempted from any necessity of considering the Popish doctrine of the true and proper merit of good works by the proof they adduce of the position to which we have referred about the sinful deficiency or imperfection attaching to all the actions of justified men; for this doctrine, if true, manifestly precludes the possibility of their being properly meritorious. But as the Papists adduce, in support of their doctrine of the proper merit of good works, some scriptural arguments which are not destitute of plausibility, the Protestants have not declined to examine this subject. We can make only a very few observations upon it.

There are two principal questions usually discussed under this head: First, What are good works? and, secondly, Are they truly and properly meritorious, as the Council of Trent asserts, of God’s favour, increase of grace, and eternal life? First, What are good works? The Church of Rome having determined that good works should be meritorious, resolved also to extend as widely as possible,—at least in certain directions,—the sphere to which this important quality of true and proper merit attached, by comprehending many things under the name of good works whose claim to that designation Protestants refuse to admit,—such as vows, penances, fastings, festivals, pilgrimages, processions, and a number of other observances of a similar kind, connected with the rites and ceremonies of the Romish Church, and all fitted, more or less directly, to advance the interests of the system, and to extend the influence of the priesthood. It is for the purpose

of contradicting and exposing the Popish notions upon this subject, that the chapter on "Good Works" in our Confession of Faith\* is introduced with the following position: "Good works are only such as God hath commanded in His holy word, and *not* such as, without the warrant thereof, are devised by men, out of blind zeal, or upon any pretence of good intention." This position, the truth of which we need not stop to illustrate, cuts off at once many of the works which the Church of Rome urges upon men as good and meritorious.

It is common also, and quite pertinent, to discuss under this head the famous Popish distinction between commands of duty and counsels of perfection,—a distinction which is the foundation, doctrinally, of the whole monastic system. Papists hold that, while there are many precepts and commands in Scripture addressed to all, and equally binding upon all, there are also some higher exercises of virtue, which are not universally commanded or enjoined, but only counselled or recommended to those who aspire to perfection; and which, of course, are more abundantly meritorious, than those good works which are performed in obedience to express and universal requirements. The chief of these counsels of perfection are the voluntary renunciation of property, of marriage, and of the power of regulating our own actions; and when these things are renounced, and especially when the renunciation is sealed with a vow,—the vow, as they call it, of poverty, chastity, and obedience,—they regard this as a state of perfection which is highly meritorious, in which a very large stock of merit may be laid up. Protestants have no great difficulty in overturning from Scripture their whole distinction, and all the particular instances to which it is applied, and are thus able to maintain unbroken and unqualified their fundamental position, that "good works are only such as God hath commanded in His holy word;" and thus to overturn one of the foundations on which the doctrine of merit and supererogation is based.

Protestants hold, that regenerate men are bound to perform, and do perform, good works, though Papists commonly represent them as denying both these positions. They admit that the good works men perform, are in substance, and as to their main character and leading features, accordant with the requirements of

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\* C. xvi.

God's law, and therefore, in some sense, pleasing and acceptable in His sight; but they maintain that they are not meritorious, or possessed of true and proper merit,—that they are not meritorious, as the Council of Trent asserts, of eternal life,—and that they never surpass, either in number or in excellence, what the law of God requires. Independently of the consideration which was formerly adverted to, and which is absolutely and manifestly inconsistent with the ascription of merit,—viz., that even the best works of regenerate men are stained with sinful imperfection,—Protestants rest their denial of the meritoriousness of good works mainly upon these two grounds: First, that men are under a positive obligation to perform them, and are not at liberty to neglect them; and, secondly, that they bear no proportion to the result which they are said to merit,—viz., the favour of God and eternal life. It seems essential to the idea of true and proper merit, that the actions to which it is ascribed be such as are not incumbent, as matter of imperative and unavoidable obligation, on those by whom they are performed; that they could omit or neglect them without thereby necessarily committing sin, and without thereby justly exposing themselves to punishment. True and proper merit, therefore, cannot attach to any action which God's law expressly enjoins. It might indeed possibly attach, so far as this argument is concerned, to counsels of perfection. But then, first, there *is* no such class of actions which it is competent to men to perform; and then, secondly, Papists who maintain that there is, do not restrict merit to actions of this class, but extend it,—*i.e.*, the possibility of it,—to all the good works of regenerate men.

On this ground, then, no actions done in obedience to God's law, even though fully accordant with what the law requires, can possess true and proper merit, so as to deserve *anything* at God's hand; and still less, in the second place, can they merit eternal life, from the total want of equality, nay, from the infinite disproportion between the good actions of men, even though they were free from all sinful imperfection, and the result which they are said to deserve. In addition to these general considerations, which evidently exclude or disprove true and proper merit, there is abundance of direct Scripture statement to prove that no man ever merited anything from God; and that every man is, at all times, indebted to God's *unmerited* mercy and kindness, for every



gift he receives, for every favour he enjoys, for every hope he entertains.

I have said that the Popish doctrine of the true and proper merit of good works is not altogether destitute of what may seem, at first sight, to be plausible scriptural evidence. It must be plain, however, that with such an amount of scriptural evidence against it as that to which we have briefly referred, as establishing the positions above laid down, it could be admitted only if principles or statements in support of it could be produced from Scripture, of a very clear and explicit description,—principles bearing very directly and conclusively upon the precise point in dispute,—statements which cannot be explained away by any reasonable or legitimate process, and which cannot admit of any other meaning than that which the Papists ascribe to them. Of course the Scripture proof they adduce consists in those statements which plainly indicate some connection as actually subsisting, according to God's arrangements, between good works and admission into heaven; and especially those which represent heaven and eternal life as the *reward* of good works (*μισθος*, *merces*). Now, here again, it might be admitted, as in the question formerly adverted to about the strictly penal character of the providential sufferings of good men, that *had we no other information given us* in Scripture upon the subject, these statements might not unreasonably be regarded as sanctioning the Popish principle, that good works are meritorious of eternal life. But here also, as there, we contend,—first, that this Popish view of the nature or character of the connection subsisting between good works and eternal life, is wholly precluded by other scriptural principles and statements; and, secondly, that there is no great difficulty in reconciling the representations on which the Popish conclusion is based, with the Protestant principle that they are not meritorious of eternal life; while, on the other hand, it is not possible to reconcile those scriptural representations on which the Protestant conclusion is founded, with the Popish principle that they *are*. Eternal life is, no doubt, represented in Scripture as the reward of good works; and Papists allege that merit and reward are correlative ideas, the one necessarily implying the other. But eternal life is also represented in Scripture as the free gift of God; and Protestants contend that its being a free gift *necessarily* excludes the idea of its being truly merited by good works; and

that its being a reward does *not* necessarily imply the reverse. This is the state of the question. I cannot enter into any detailed discussion of it, but would only remark,—first, that it has been proved that the idea of reward is, in several instances, introduced and applied in Scripture in cases where there was certainly nothing meritorious, and that, consequently, merit is not its specific and invariable correlative; and, secondly, that when the apostle says,\* “To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt,” he plainly and unequivocally intimates that the word *reward* is taken in two different senses; and that a thing may be truly represented as a reward, when he who receives it had no claim to it, had done nothing whatever to merit it, but had obtained it of grace without merit. Since this distinction has the express sanction of Scripture, and since Scripture also affords abundant materials to prove that the reward of eternal life is given of grace and not of debt, we are not only warranted, but bound, if we would submit fully to the whole teaching of Scripture upon this subject, to apply the distinction, and to regard it not only as legitimate, but imperative, to believe that the circumstance of eternal life being represented as the reward of good works was not intended to convey the idea that it is merited by them; and to maintain, without any limitation or modification, the great scriptural principle, that eternal life, and everything that conduces to, or prepares for, it, is altogether the free gift of God’s unmerited kindness through Christ.

This doctrine of merit, then, is another important point in which the Church of Rome has grievously perverted the word of God,—perverted it in a way in which no other sect has ventured to follow her example, since even Socinians reject the idea of merit,—perverted it in a way which has a most direct and powerful tendency to produce a state of mind and feeling diametrically opposed to what the whole word of God inculcates, and fitted to exert a most injurious influence upon men’s spiritual welfare.

Bellarmino, after labouring to establish the doctrine of the Council of Trent,—that the good works of regenerate men are truly meritorious of eternal life,—proposes to investigate, distinctly and separately, this question, How far *reliance* ought to be placed upon merits,—“*quatenus fiducia in meritis collocari possit.*” †

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\* Rom. iv. 4.

† Bellarm., De Justificat. L. v., c. vii.

He represents, and very truly, the heretics, as he calls them, as unanimous in maintaining that no reliance whatever is to be placed upon merits, and then proceeds to ridicule the earnestness of Calvin and other Protestants in asserting this, and to try to prove what he calls the doctrine of the Catholic Church,—viz., that though men ought indeed to place their chief confidence in God, yet that they should also place some reliance upon their own merits, “*præcipuam quidem spem, et fiduciam in Deo ponendam esse; aliquam tamen etiam in meritis poni posse.*” Many Popish writers have asserted this principle more broadly and offensively than Bellarmine has done; and, to do him justice, he seems almost ashamed of the doctrine which his church obliged him to defend; for he concludes with a remarkable statement, which has been often quoted, and which is not only a virtual retraction of this particular sentiment, but really amounts, in substance and spirit, to a virtual repudiation of the whole five books he had written upon justification. It is in these words: “*Propter incertitudinem propriæ justitiæ, et periculum inanis gloriæ tutissimum est, fiduciam totam in sola Dei misericordia, et benignitate reponere.*” This is a very interesting and important declaration, especially as indicating very plainly, though indirectly, the true character and tendency of Popish doctrine, and the sense entertained of the danger of practically applying and acting upon it, by the ablest of its defenders. If men *have* merits,—true and proper merits,—as the Council of Trent expressly asserts, and as Bellarmine had laboured to prove, *they are entitled to rely upon them*; and from all we know of human nature and the history of the world, we may be assured that they will rely upon them, instead of placing their whole confidence in the sole mercy and kindness of God. The doctrine of the Church of Rome warrants this, nay, requires it; and men who are ignorant of the word of God, and ignorant of themselves, will have no difficulty in receiving and applying this teaching. When they are taught that they can truly and properly merit by their good works the favour of God and eternal life, they will not be deterred from relying upon these merits by a prudential caution, such as Bellarmine has given,—a mere *tutissimum est*,—a hint that they had better not, and that, all things considered, it is safer to abstain. The whole word of God teaches us that we should place no reliance upon our own merits, and rest our whole confidence upon the alone mercy and kindness

of God and the work of Christ. The Church of Rome denies this great principle, and inculcates a doctrine directly opposed to it in substance and tendency. We must believe the Romish doctrine of merit, for the Council of Trent requires this, under an anathema. But Bellarmine is constrained at last virtually to admit, that though we must believe with the Catholic Church, it is safer to feel and act with heretics,—to feel and act as if we disbelieved the Council of Trent, and concurred in opinion with the Reformers. It is safest to rely exclusively upon the mercy and kindness of God; and that doctrine is to be received as scriptural and true which inculcates and produces this exclusive reliance upon Him; while that doctrine is to be rejected as unquestionably false, and as unspeakably dangerous, which sanctions, and has a direct tendency to produce, any reliance upon our own merits for the enjoyment of God's favour and the possession of eternal life.

In regard to works of supererogation, the Council of Trent has not formally and explicitly asserted their possibility and reality. The responsibility of the Church of Rome for the doctrine that men may do more, in the way of obedience to God's law, than is necessary in order to escaping wholly from the consequences of their own sins, and meriting heaven for themselves, is deduced inferentially, though satisfactorily and conclusively, from her teaching concerning the distinction between commands of duty and counsels of perfection,—concerning vicarious human satisfactions,—and especially concerning the general treasury of merits, composed indiscriminately of the superfluous merits of Christ and the saints, and the use and application of the contents of this treasury as the ground and foundation of indulgences. The generality of approved Romish writers have plainly taught the doctrine of supererogation, though in modern times they do not usually give so much prominence as they used to do, either to it or to the general treasury of the church. Moehler, in his Symbolism,\* describes it “as that remarkable doctrine . . . which certainly, like every other that hath for centuries existed in the world . . . is sure to rest upon some deep foundation.” He adduces no other positive evidence in support of it, and this is not sufficient. It is a remarkable doctrine, and it *does* rest upon a deep founda-

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\* Symbolism, vol. i., p. 244.



tion; but this deep foundation is nothing but the natural tendency of fallen and depraved men to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, and to go about to establish a righteousness of their own. He does not attempt to answer the scriptural arguments against it, and tries to evade the objections against it from experience, merely by a misapplication of the well-known principle, that "Christians of a very high stamp appear to men of a lower grade of perfection as enthusiasts, as men of heated fancy and distempered mind;" while he alleges, with ludicrous complacency, that "the tenderness and delicacy" of this doctrine "eluded the perception of the Reformers." But it is unnecessary to dwell upon this doctrine, so remarkable, so deep-seated, so tender, and so delicate. It may be sufficient to quote concerning it the following extract from Melancthon's "Commonplaces,"—an extract which, in spirit and style, very much resembles what might have been expected from Luther, and which, perhaps, may be regarded as giving some countenance to Moehler's insinuation about the bluntness and coarseness of the perceptions of the Reformers upon this topic: "This is not a human notion, but an absolute sarcasm of the devil, mocking and deriding the blindness into which he has betrayed us; that, when God has published His law, to show for what perfection man was created, and into what ruin he has fallen, the devil should put such an irony" or drollery "upon us, as to persuade us that now, in our present ruined state, we can even go *beyond* that law."\*

*Sec. IX.—Practical Tendency of the Popish Doctrine of  
Justification.*

We have now completed our survey of the doctrine of the Church of Rome, as contrasted with that of the Reformers, on the vitally important subject of justification, or the forgiveness and acceptance of sinners in the sight of God,—on everything bearing on that change of state in relation to God and His law, which is indispensable to their eternal welfare.

We have found that there is good ground to believe that the Council of Trent has taught,—and that, of course, the Church of

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\* Scott, Continuation of Milner, vol. ii., p. 237; Melancthon. Opera, tom. i., p. 177.

Rome is pledged irrevocably to maintain,—doctrines upon this subject which are inconsistent with the teaching of the word of God ; erroneous and anti-scriptural views regarding the nature and import of justification,—the ground or basis on which it rests,—and the way and manner in which men individually become possessed of it. This consideration of itself, independently of the importance, absolute or comparative, of the particular topics involved in the Romish doctrine of justification as a whole, affords quite sufficient reason why we should reject the claims which the Church of Rome puts forth to be received as the mother and mistress of all churches,—as the infallible expounder of divine truth ; and why we should abandon her communion, and seek or provide for ourselves a purer dispensation of the word of life. The subject is, from its very nature,—from its direct and immediate bearing upon the spiritual and eternal welfare of men,—one of primary importance in a practical point of view ; and all error concerning it must be dangerous and injurious. Indeed, it may be said that the leading object or end of the whole inspired word of God is to unfold to men,—first, what is their state and condition by nature ; and, secondly, what provision God has made for saving them from this state, and in what way men individually become interested in this provision, and partakers in its blessed results. On the first of these great heads of doctrine,—the condition and character of men by nature,—the Church of Rome acted, as we have had occasion to explain, with a good deal of caution ; while in regard to the second, though not laying aside altogether her cautious and insidious mode of procedure, she has ventured more boldly and decidedly to corrupt the truth revealed in the word of God, and to inculcate erroneous views upon points bearing immediately upon men's relation to God and their eternal destinies,—to furnish unsound and misleading information upon the great questions, How may man be just before God ? and, What must we do to be saved ? In introducing this subject, we said that the Church of Rome held some general scriptural principles upon this subject, which, if honestly and fully followed out, would have led to much sounder views upon the whole matter than the Council of Trent has inculcated ; and that the great general charge adduced against her by the Reformers was, that, in the more detailed exposition of her views, and in the practical arrangements and requirements which she has based upon them, she has neutralized all that was sound

and scriptural in the general principles which she conceded, and has thus introduced important perversions of scriptural truth. The great general scriptural truths which she concedes upon this subject are,—that the forgiveness of sinners, and their admission to the enjoyment of God's favour, are to be traced to the mercy and kindness of God, and to the work of Christ as Mediator. These are great truths; and when they are honestly and fully held and applied, they are fitted, as instruments in the hand of God's Spirit, to produce all those things that accompany salvation,—all those things that are necessary to prepare men for admission into the enjoyment of God's presence. It is in virtue of her teaching these great truths that salvation *is possible* in the Church of Rome, as Protestants have always admitted that it is. The man who honestly believes, and fully and faithfully applies, these great general truths, not only may, but, according to God's arrangements, *must* be saved; and since the Church of Rome *does* inculcate these truths, and does not formally and expressly teach what explicitly and palpably contradicts them, Protestants have never had any hesitation about admitting the *possibility* of men in the Church of Rome really and practically resting only upon the mercy of God and the work of Christ, and so attaining to salvation in the way which God has appointed.

When, however, we attend more closely and particularly to the detailed exposition of the views of the Church of Rome upon this subject, and to the practical applications she makes of them, we can discern a great deal that tends to obscure and pervert these great general truths,—to throw them into the background,—to prevent them from exercising their natural and appropriate influence, and to promote a general state of mind and feeling, the reverse of what they are fitted to produce. The leading allegations which Protestants have adduced and established against the full and detailed scheme of Popish doctrine upon this subject are these:—first, that it excludes the vicarious work of Christ, including His satisfaction and obedience, from its rightful place in the matter of a sinner's justification, and thus tends to involve the whole subject of the way and manner in which Christ's work bears at once upon God's act in bestowing, and men's act in receiving, pardon and acceptance, in vagueness, obscurity, and confusion;—and, secondly, that it assigns to men's own doings in the matter a place and influence which they are wholly unfitted

to sustain, and thus tends to lead men to go about to establish a righteousness of their own, instead of doing what is indispensable to their salvation,—namely, submitting themselves to the righteousness of God, the righteousness of Jesus Christ which is of God by faith;—and to cherish a feeling of self-righteousness and self-dependence. The Council of Trent, aware that these charges had been adduced against the Romish doctrine by the Reformers, and that there was at least some appearance of ground for them, wind up their whole deliverance upon the various topics comprehended under the head of justification in their thirty-third or last canon, in the following words: “If any one saith, that, by the Catholic doctrine touching Justification, by this holy Synod set forth in this present decree, the glory of God, or the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ are in any way derogated from, and not rather that the truth of our faith, and the glory in fine of God and of Jesus Christ are rendered (more) illustrious; let him be anathema.”\* And Calvin’s answer to this canon, in his Antidote, to which I have had repeated occasion to refer, is in these words: “An ingenious caution, truly, to prevent every man from seeing what all see. They have almost entirely frustrated or made void the glory of God and the grace of Christ together; and at the same time they forbid, under a curse, any one to imagine that they have derogated in the least from either. This is just as if any one should kill a man in the open market, in the sight of all men, and then should enjoin that no one should believe in the reality of the murder which all had seen committed. These men clearly show their true character, by trying to deter men by anathema from venturing to perceive that impiety of which they themselves were conscious.”† Perhaps this striking statement of Calvin’s, though true in the main, scarcely takes sufficiently into account the skill and caution with which the decree of the Council of Trent upon this subject was framed, and applies more exactly to the general strain of doctrine and sentiments that prevailed in the ordinary public teaching of the Romish Church. Enough, however, has, I trust, been said to show, that in the decrees and canons of the sixth session of the Council of Trent, there is much that contradicts the teaching of the word of God upon the most im-

\* Sess. vi., Canon xxxiii., Waterworth’s translation.

† Antidot. in Canon. xxxiii., sess. vi.



portant of all subjects,—that gives a most erroneous view of the plan which God has devised, executed, and revealed for saving sinners,—a view fitted to exert an injurious influence upon their spiritual welfare, and to endanger the salvation of their souls;—and that, of course, the Church of Rome incurred fearful guilt, and became more deeply and hopelessly apostate than ever, by deliberately, solemnly, and unchangeably rejecting those great scriptural principles concerning the way of a sinner's salvation, which, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, the Reformers were made the instruments of reviving and restoring, and pressing again upon the attention of men.

We cannot fully understand the bearing and tendency of the Romish system, unless we view its formal doctrinal statements in connection with the known principles and tendencies of human nature; and observe also how Papists, in the application of their doctrines, and in the practical arrangements and outward observances which are based upon them, have most carefully and skillfully made provision for fostering and strengthening tendencies of an erroneous and dangerous description. The view we have given of the doctrine formally professed by the Church of Rome, upon the leading topics involved in the exposition of justification, discloses some very important corruptions of the system unfolded in Scripture, as being that which God has provided and revealed for securing men's deliverance and salvation, and imparting to them the blessings necessary for that end. This must necessarily be very injurious and very dangerous in its practical bearing upon men's opinions and conduct with respect to the way of salvation. But the full extent of its injurious and dangerous tendency is brought out only when the system is contemplated in connection with the natural tendencies of depraved men.

One of the strongest and most universal tendencies of men in their fallen and depraved condition, is to go about to establish a righteousness of their own,—to rely upon what they themselves are, or do, or can do, for procuring the forgiveness of their sins and the enjoyment of God's favour. That this tendency is natural to fallen men, and is deep-seated in their moral constitution, is abundantly proved by a survey of the religions of heathenism and of corrupted Judaism. This tendency was openly and decidedly opposed by the inspired apostles, as going far to neutralize and counteract the fundamental principles, and to frustrate the

practical objects, of the only true method of salvation. The Apostle Paul's account of the cause or reason of the partial success of his efforts to promote the salvation of his kinsmen according to the flesh is full of instruction and warning upon this subject. It is this, that they, being ignorant of God's righteousness,—*i.e.*, of the divine method of justification through the perfect righteousness which God has provided,—and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God, and of course have forfeited the blessings which were offered to them, and have put away from them eternal life. This is the great difficulty which all who are labouring for the salvation of sinners have still to encounter, and which is found to exist in peculiar strength in those who have been subjected to the full action of the Romish system of doctrine and practice. The influence of this tendency, in not only leading men practically to reject the gospel for themselves and their own salvation, but speculatively to obscure and pervert its system of doctrine, was very early and extensively exhibited in the church, and was most fully developed in the general character of the system of doctrine and practice that generally prevailed in the Church of Rome before the Reformation. After the true doctrine of Scripture had been fully brought out by the Reformers, the Council of Trent, though alive to the importance of avoiding what was grossly offensive in statement, and of evading the arguments adduced by the Reformers from the word of God against the notions that then generally prevailed in the Church of Rome, did not hesitate to lay down many positions which are obviously fitted powerfully to strengthen this tendency, and to give it a firmer hold of men's minds. We cannot now dwell again at any length upon the different doctrines which enter into the Romish system of justification, for the purpose of illustrating this tendency as attaching to them; and it is not very necessary, because, in spite of the anathema of the council, it may be asserted that the tendency of its doctrines to derogate from the glory of God's grace, and from the efficacy and sufficiency of the satisfaction and obedience of Christ, is abundantly manifested. But we may repeat, that the Council of Trent confounds justification and sanctification,—denies the imputation of Christ's righteousness as the immediate ground, or cause, or reason of God's act in pardoning and accepting sinners,—substitutes in its place a personal inherent righteous-

ness of our own,—represents six other virtues, as they call them, as standing in the very same relation to justification as faith does,—the whole seven equally and alike being declared to prepare and dispose men to justification,—leaves room *on purpose* for allowing Romanists to hold, as almost all Romish writers do, that they deserve justification of congruity,—explains the special prominence assigned to faith in Scripture, on the ground of its being the source or root of the other virtues;—and, finally, ascribes to men, when once justified, a power of making satisfaction to God for the temporal punishment due to their sins, and of strictly and properly meriting or deserving at His hand increase of grace and eternal life. The confounding of justification and renovation or sanctification, tends to involve the whole subject in obscurity and confusion, and to diminish men's sense of the necessity and importance of a change in their judicial relation to God and His law, as a distinct and definite step in the process by which their salvation is effected. It tends, also, in the case of men who have been justified,—as is strikingly exhibited in the lives and writings of the Jansenists, who were the best and holiest men, and the soundest theologians, the Romish Church has ever produced,—to deprive them of legitimate comfort and enlargement of heart, to engender a spirit of bondage and servile fear, and to involve them in foolish, injurious, and degrading observances in the way of penance and mortification.

The denial of the direct and immediate bearing of the vicarious work of Christ upon God's act in pardoning and accepting sinners,—the substitution in its room of a personal righteousness of our own, while the work of Christ is regarded as bearing upon the result only indirectly, by procuring in some way for men the infusion of the personal righteousness which is the only formal cause or ground of justification,—not only obscures and perverts the true foundation of the whole process, by throwing its most essential feature into the background, but has also the most direct and powerful tendency to lead men to rely upon what is, in some sense, their own, and what they will be very prone to regard as solely, or at least principally, their own, or something wrought in them or done by them. This tendency is obviously confirmed by the representation given of the function and operation of faith: the subordinate place assigned to it, on the one hand, in classing it along with half a dozen of other virtues which flow from it; and,

on the other, the exalted place assigned to it, as well as to them, in exerting some meritorious efficacy in procuring the result,—in operating in the matter of justification by reason of its own worth or excellency. And, when all this is viewed in connection with the Romish doctrine of human satisfaction and proper merit in the case of men already justified, what can be reasonably expected but that Romanists should be practically and principally relying upon the doings and deservings of themselves and others, for the forgiveness of their sins and the enjoyment of God's favour? All this tends to strengthen and confirm, in place of checking and subduing, men's natural tendency to self-righteousness and self-dependence; and the doctrine, thus formally and explicitly taught, viewed in connection with this natural tendency, is obviously fitted to endanger men's spiritual and eternal welfare, by leading them to abstain from doing what, according to God's revealed arrangements, is indispensable to their happiness,—to build their hopes upon a false foundation,—and to cherish a habitual state of mind and feeling which prevents them from giving to the grace of God and the work of Christ the glory which is due to them.

There is in the Romish system such an acknowledgment of the grace of God and the work of Christ, as in some way concerned in the matter, as to affect somewhat the perfect accuracy of Calvin's illustration derived from the case of a murder committed openly in the market; but, on this very account, the scheme is all the more insidious and the more dangerous: for while it is true, on the one hand, that the general acknowledgment that the grace of God and the merits of Christ, which the Council of Trent permits, may be applied and improved by some for the salvation of their souls, the other doctrines with which this acknowledgment is accompanied and obscured, tend, on the other, to lead men in general in a wrong direction, and to expose them to serious danger. It is so obvious that, in the sacred Scriptures, the forgiveness and acceptance of sinners are ascribed chiefly to the grace of God and the work of Christ, that this could scarcely be formally and explicitly denied by any who admitted the divine authority of the Bible. In these circumstances, the ingenuity of the great enemy of souls was directed to the object of preserving this general acknowledgment in words and outward profession, but at the same time counteracting and neutralizing it in its practical tendency. To this the whole system of Popish doctrine and practice



is directed, and for the accomplishment of all this it is admirably fitted. It deludes men with an appearance and a profession of referring their salvation to God and Christ, while it enables them to indulge their natural tendency to rely upon themselves. If any opening is left for the indulgence of this tendency, it will be sure to insinuate itself, and to exert a perverting and dangerous influence upon men's opinions, feelings, and conduct. The doctrine of the Scripture shuts up every chink through which any feeling of self-righteousness and self-dependence could be introduced, by representing men as wholly worthless and wholly helpless, and by ascribing their deliverance and salvation, in all its causes and in all its results, to the grace of God and the work of Christ. The Church of Rome throws down the barriers which have thus been erected, and practically divides the work of men's salvation between God and themselves; and when men are encouraged formally and directly to make such a partition, they are not likely to be very careful about preserving what they admit in words to be the lawful shares of the respective parties, and they will not hesitate to take the largest portion to themselves.

It is evidently a fundamental principle in God's arrangements, in connection with the everlasting destinies of the human race, that men are to be saved by or through knowing and applying the provision which He has made for saving them. Ignorance or error, therefore, in regard to the nature and bearing of this provision, must be at once sinful and dangerous, as implying a refusal to submit to the authority of the revelation which God has made of His mind and purposes, and as tending to frustrate the great practical object to which the provision was directed. And the ignorance or error must be the more sinful and the more dangerous, according as it is connected more directly and immediately with the fundamental principles of the provision,—with the leading features of the state of feeling and the course of conduct which the contemplation of the provision is fitted to produce. If God, as the only means of saving sinners in a way consistent with the attributes of His nature, the principles of His moral government, and the honour of His law, sent His Only-begotten into the world to suffer and die for them, it must be of the last importance that men should distinctly and correctly understand *how it is* that the mediatorial work of Christ bears upon their relation to God and their everlasting destiny; and

what is the state of feeling they ought to cherish, and the course of conduct they ought to pursue, in regard to it. We have seen that the Protestant doctrine of justification presents a consistent and harmonious scheme, in full accordance with all the general views unfolded to us in Scripture concerning the unchangeable character of God, and the natural condition and character of men,—ascribing to the work of Christ a prominence and efficacy suited to the exalted character of so extraordinary a provision,—leading men to seek and to receive salvation, and all that it involves, as the free and unmerited gift of God's grace, and to live thereafter under a deep and heartfelt conviction that they are not their own, but bought with a price,—and teaching them that the one object which they are bound to aim at is to show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvellous light; while the Popish system, of throwing the work of Christ into the background, and of ascribing much in the matter to what is done by men themselves, by telling them that they can do much to procure, and even merit, for themselves the blessings they need, tends to produce a different mode of acting, and a different state of feeling,—tends to lead men to go about to establish their own righteousness, instead of simply receiving the righteousness which God has provided for and offered to them, and to cherish a feeling of confidence and dependence upon themselves,—a feeling inconsistent at once with that profound sense of obligation, and that depth of filial affection, towards God which are the distinguishing characteristics of true believers. Upon the ground of the general acknowledgment of the grace of God and the work of Christ which the Council of Trent permits, men may, even in the Romish communion, be practically resting upon the mercy of God and the righteousness of Christ. But the tendency of the whole Popish system, when fully imbibed and applied, is to lead men to build upon a different, a false foundation; while the very profession they are permitted to make of relying upon God's mercy and Christ's work may just conceal from them the truth, that they are practically relying upon themselves, and thus only increase the danger to which all their strongest natural tendencies expose them, of disregarding and rejecting the only provision whereby guilty and fallen men can be saved.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE SACRAMENTAL PRINCIPLE.

WE have referred only incidentally to the doctrine of the Church of Rome as to the bearing and influence of the sacraments in the justification of sinners. But as this is a very important feature of the Romish system of theology,—as the Romish doctrine on this subject was strenuously opposed by the Reformers,—and as the doctrine of sacramental justification, as it has been called, has been revived in our own day, and been zealously maintained even by men who have not yet joined the Church of Rome,—it may be proper to make some further observations upon it.

#### *Sec. I.—Sacramental Grace.*

The natural enmity of the human heart to the principles and plans of the divine procedure in regard to the salvation of sinners,—the natural tendency to self-righteousness which is so strongly and universally characteristic of mankind,—has appeared in two different forms: first, a tendency to rely for the forgiveness of sin and the enjoyment of God's favour upon what men themselves are, or can do; and, secondly, a tendency to rely upon the intervention and assistance of other men or creatures, and upon outward ordinances. Heathenism exhibited both; and the corrupted Judaism of our Saviour's days,—the prevailing party of the Pharisees,—exhibited both. The Sadducees of the apostolic days, and the Socinian and the rationalistic, or the semi-infidel and the infidel, forms of professed Christianity in modern times, have exhibited only the first of these tendencies, in different degrees of grossness, on the one hand, or of plausibility, on the other; while Popery, like heathenism and corrupted Judaism, exhibits a combination of both. There appeared in the church at an early period,

a tendency to speak of the nature, design, and effects of the sacraments, or the "tremendous mysteries," as some of the fathers call them, in a very inflated and exaggerated style,—a style very different from anything we find in Scripture upon the subject. This tendency increased continually as sound doctrine disappeared and vital religion decayed, until, in the middle ages, Christianity was looked upon by the great body of its professors as a system which consisted in, and the whole benefits of which were connected with, a series of outward ceremonies and ritual observances. The nature, design, and effects of the sacraments occupied a large share of the attention of the schoolmen; and, indeed, the exposition and development of what is sometimes called in our days the "sacramental principle," may be justly regarded as one of the principal exhibitions of the anti-scriptural views and the perverted ingenuity of the scholastic doctors. An exaggerated and unscriptural view of the value and efficacy of the sacraments was too deeply ingrained into the scholastic theology, and was too much in accordance with the usual policy of the Church of Rome, and the general character and tendency of her doctrine, to admit of the Council of Trent giving any sanction to the sounder views upon the subject which had been introduced by the Reformers, and especially by the Calvinistic section of them,—for Luther always continued to hold some defective and erroneous notions upon this point. The doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject is set forth in the first part of the decree of the seventh session of the Council of Trent, which treats *de Sacramentis in genere*, and in other statements made in treating of some of the sacraments individually. The leading features of their doctrine are these:—that, through the sacraments of the church, all true righteousness either begins, or when begun, is increased, or when lost, is repaired; that men do not obtain from God the grace of justification by faith alone without the sacraments, or at least without a desire and wish to receive them; that the sacraments confer grace always upon all who receive them, unless they put an obstacle in the way (*ponunt obicem*),—that is, as they usually explain it, unless they have, at the time of receiving them, a deliberate intention of committing sin;—and that they confer grace thus universally *ex opere operato*, or by some power or virtue given to them, and operating through them. And with respect, more particularly, to the forgiveness of sin, the Church of Rome



teaches, as we have seen, that baptism is the instrumental cause of justification,—that all previous sins are certainly forgiven in baptism,—and that no sin is forgiven, not even the original sin of those who die in infancy, without it;—and, finally, that post-baptismal sin is forgiven only in the sacrament of penance, that is, through the confession of the sinner and the absolution of the priest.

This is just, in substance, the doctrine which is taught by the modern Tractarians, under the name of the “sacramental principle.” Mr Newman, in his *Lectures on Justification*, published several years before he left the Church of England, gives the following summary of his views upon the subject: “Justification comes *through* the Sacraments; is received *by* faith; *consists* in God’s inward presence, and *lives* in obedience;”\* and again: “Whether we say we are justified by faith, or by works, or by Sacraments, all these but mean this one doctrine, that we are justified by grace, which is given through Sacraments, impetrated by faith, manifested in works.”† He admits, indeed, that, in some sense, faith is the internal, while baptism is the external, instrument of justification; but, in explaining their respective offices and functions as instruments in the production of the result, he ascribes to faith a position of posteriority and subordination to baptism. “The Sacraments,” he says, “are the immediate, faith is the secondary, subordinate, or representative instrument of justification.” “Faith being the appointed representative of Baptism, derives its authority and virtue from that which it represents. It is justifying because of Baptism; it is the faith of the baptized, of the regenerate, that is, of the justified. Justifying faith does not precede justification; but justification precedes faith, and makes it justifying. And here lies the cardinal mistake of the views on the subject which are now in esteem (evangelical). They make faith the sole instrument, not after Baptism but before; whereas Baptism is the primary instrument, and makes faith to be what it is, and otherwise is not.”‡ He admits, indeed, what could not well be denied, that, in some sense, faith *exists* before baptism,—*i.e.*, of course, in adults; but he denies that faith has then,—or until after baptism makes it, as he says, justifying,—any

\* Newman, *Lectures on Justification*, pp. 316, 317.

† *Ibid.*, p. 345.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

influence whatever upon justification. This was certainly raising the efficacy of the sacraments at least as high as the Council of Trent did; while it also exhibited, in addition to its heresy, a depth of folly and absurdity, and a daring opposition to the plain teaching of Scripture, which the Council of Trent had usually the sense and the decency to avoid.

The essential idea of this Popish and Tractarian doctrine of the sacraments is this: that God has established an invariable connection between these external ordinances, and the communication of Himself,—the possession by men of spiritual blessings, pardon, and holiness; with this further notion, which naturally results from it, that He has endowed these outward ordinances with some sort of power or capacity of conveying or conferring the blessings with which they are respectively connected. It is a necessary result of this principle, that the want of the outward ordinance,—not the neglect or contempt of it, but the mere want of it, from whatever cause arising,—deprives men of the spiritual blessings which it is said to confer. The Church of Rome has found it necessary or politic to make some little exceptions to this practical conclusion; but this is the great general principle to which her whole system of doctrine upon the subject leads, and which ordinarily she does not hesitate to apply. The Protestant doctrine, upon the other hand, is, that the only thing on which the possession by men individually of spiritual blessings,—of justification and sanctification,—is made necessarily and invariably dependent, is union to Christ; and that the only thing on which union to Christ may be said to be dependent, is faith in Him: so that it holds true, absolutely and universally, that wherever there is faith in Christ, or union to Christ by faith, *there* pardon and holiness,—all necessary spiritual blessings,—are communicated by God and received by men, even though they have not actually partaken in any sacrament or external ordinance whatever. If this great principle can be fully established from Scripture,—as Protestants believe it can,—then it overturns from the foundation the Popish and Tractarian doctrine about the office and function of the sacraments; while, on the other hand, if they can establish from Scripture their doctrine of the sacraments, this would necessitate a rejection or modification of the great Protestant principle above stated. It is to be observed, however, that even after this Protestant principle has been established from Scripture, and after

the Popish and Tractarian view of the sacraments, which is inconsistent with it, has been disproved, it still remains incumbent upon Protestants to explain what the design and efficacy of the sacraments are,—what is the place they hold, and what is the influence they exert, in connection with the bestowal by God, and the reception by men, of spiritual blessings. The general doctrine of Protestants upon this subject, though there is some diversity in their mode of explaining it, is this,—that the sacraments are symbolical or exhibitivè ordinances, signs and seals of the covenant of grace, not only signifying and representing Christ and the benefits of the new covenant, but sealing, and, in some sense, applying, them to believers. They regard them, however, as mere appendages to the word or the truth, and as exerting no influence whatever, apart from the faith which the participation in them expresses, and which must exist in each adult *before* participation in them can be either warrantable or beneficial. These are the leading topics involved in the discussion of this subject, and this is the way in which they are connected with each other.

There is one remark that may be of some use in explaining the discussions which have taken place upon this point,—namely, that when the subject of the sacraments in general,—that is, of their general nature, design, and efficacy,—is under consideration, it is usually assumed that the persons who partake of them are possessed of the necessary preliminary qualifications; and, more particularly, that when statements are made upon this subject which are applied equally to baptism and the Lord's Supper, or when the general object and design of baptism and the Lord's Supper are set forth in the abstract, it is adult participation only which theologians have ordinarily in view,—the participation of those who, after they have grown up to years of understanding, desire to hold communion with the visible church of Christ. It is in this aspect that baptism, as well as the Lord's Supper, is usually referred to, and presented to us, in the New Testament; and it is from the case of adult participation that we ought to form our general views and impressions of the meaning and design of these ordinances. It tends greatly to introduce obscurity and confusion into our whole conceptions upon the subject of baptism, that we see it ordinarily administered to infants, and very seldom to adults. This leads us insensibly to form very defective and erroneous conceptions of its design and effect, or rather to live

with our minds very much in the state of blanks, so far as concerns any distinct and definite views upon the subject. There is a difficulty felt,—a difficulty which Scripture does not afford us materials for altogether removing,—in laying down any very distinct and definite doctrine as to the precise bearing and efficacy of baptism in the case of infants, to whom alone ordinarily we see it administered. And hence it becomes practically, as well as theoretically, important to remember, that we ought to form our primary and fundamental conceptions of baptism from the baptism of adults, in which it must be, *in every instance*, according to the general doctrine of Protestants, *either* the sign and seal of a faith and regeneration *previously existing*,—already effected by God's grace,—or else a hypocritical profession of a state of mind and feeling which has no existence. This is the original and fundamental idea of the ordinance of baptism, as it is usually represented to us in Scripture. And when we contemplate it in this light, there is no more difficulty in forming a distinct and definite conception regarding it than regarding the Lord's Supper. We have no doubt that the lawfulness of infant baptism can be conclusively established from Scripture; but it is manifest that the general doctrine or theory with respect to the design and effect of baptism, as above stated, must undergo some modification in its application to the case of infants. And the danger to be provided against, is that of taking the baptism of infants, with all the difficulties attaching to giving a precise and definite statement as to its design and effect in their case, and making *this* regulate our whole conceptions with respect to the ordinance in general,—and even with respect to sacraments in general,—instead of regarding adult baptism as affording the proper and fundamental type of it; deriving our general conceptions of it from that case, and then, since infant baptism is also fully warranted by Scripture, examining what modifications the leading general views of the ordinance must undergo when applied to the special and peculiar case of the baptism of infants. The Reformers, when discussing this subject, having adult baptism chiefly in their view, usually speak as if they regarded baptism and regeneration as substantially identical; not intending to assert or concede the Popish principle of an invariable connection between them, as a general thesis,—for it is quite certain, and can be most fully established, that they rejected this,—but because the Council of



Trent, in treating of the general subject of justification, discussed it chiefly in its bearing upon the case of those who had not been baptized in infancy, and with whom, consequently, baptism, if it was not a mere hypocritical profession, destitute of all worth or value, was, in the judgment of Protestants, a sign and seal of a faith and a regeneration previously wrought in them, and now existing; and because it was when viewed in this aspect and application, that the great general doctrine of the design and efficacy of the sacraments, in their bearing upon the justification of sinners, stood out for examination in the clearest and most definite form. Accordingly, all that Calvin says upon the declaration of the Council of Trent, that baptism is the instrumental cause of justification, is this: "It is a great absurdity to make baptism *alone* the instrumental cause. If it be so, what becomes of the gospel? Will it, in turn, get into the lowest corner? But they say baptism is the sacrament of faith. True; but when all is said, I will still maintain that it is nothing but an appendage to the Gospel (*Evangelii appendicem*). They act preposterously in giving it the first place,—that is, in preference to the gospel or the truth; and this is just as if a man should say that the instrumental cause of a house is the handling of the workman's trowel (*trullæ manubrium*). He who, putting the gospel in the background, numbers baptism among the causes of salvation, shows thereby that he does not know what baptism is or means, or what is its functions or use."\*

These considerations are to be applied—and, indeed, must be applied—to the interpretation of the general abstract statements about a sacrament or the sacraments, and more particularly about baptism, which are to be found in the confessions of the Reformed churches. They ought be kept in view in considering the general declarations of our own Confession and Catechisms. Sacraments are there described† "as holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ and His benefits, and to confirm our interest in Him; as also to put a visible difference between those that belong unto the church and the rest of the world; and

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\* Tractatus, p. 389. Ed. 1576. | of the Reformation," pp. 245, etc.  
See "The Reformers and Theology | (Edrs.)

† Confession, C. xxvii., s. 1.

solemnly to engage them to the service of God in Christ, according to His word." This statement, of course, applies equally and alike to both sacraments; and it evidently is assumed, that those whose interest in Christ is to be confirmed by the sacraments, are persons who already, before they participate in either sacrament, have an interest in Christ, and are possessed of the necessary qualifications, whatever these may be, for the reception and improvement of the sacraments. This is brought out, if possible, still more clearly in the simple statement of the Shorter Catechism, that "a sacrament is an holy ordinance, instituted by Christ, wherein, by sensible signs, Christ and the benefits of the new covenant are represented, sealed, and applied to believers;" *to believers*,—a statement plainly conveying, and intended to convey, the doctrine that one fundamental general position concerning the sacrament is, that they are intended for believers, and, of course, for believers only, unless some special exceptional case can be made out, as we are persuaded can be done in the case of the infants of believers. In like manner, baptism is described in our Confession\* as "a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible church, but also to be *unto him* a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his engrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life." Now here, first, it is to be observed, in general, that this is just an application to the special case of baptism,—*its* import, object, and design,—of the general definition previously given of the sacraments, and, of course, with the assumption of the possession of the necessary qualifications of the persons baptized; and, secondly, and more particularly, that it applies primarily and fully only to the case of adult baptism, where the previous existence of these qualifications may be tested; while it still remains a question, to be determined after the lawfulness of infant baptism has been established, how far this general description of baptism applies fully to infant baptism, or how far some modification of the general doctrine may be necessary in that special case.

It is common to adduce against the Popish and Tractarian view of the design and efficacy of the sacraments,—against the

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\* C. xxviii., s. 1.

alleged invariable connection between them, and the communication and reception of spiritual blessings,—the general character of the Christian dispensation, as contrasted with the Jewish, in that, under the gospel, external rites and ceremonies have nothing like prominence assigned to them; and that its whole arrangements are manifestly adapted to the object of addressing directly men's understandings and consciences, and engaging *them* in the worship and service of God,—while very little provision is made for impressing their external senses. I have no doubt that the predominant spiritual character of the Christian dispensation affords a very strong presumption against the Popish system, with its seven sacraments, and its huge and burdensome load of rites and ceremonies, contrasting, as it does, very glaringly with the Christianity of the New Testament. But a general and indefinite consideration of this sort is scarcely of itself sufficient to overturn a distinct and definite position which professed to rest upon scriptural evidence. Men are not able to determine, upon general grounds, with anything like certainty, whether a particular principle or arrangement is, or is not, inconsistent with the spiritual character of the Christian dispensation. The Quakers, or Society of Friends, deduce, as an inference from the spiritual character of Christianity, that no external ordinances were intended to be permanently administered in the Christian church, and allege that the apostles baptized and administered the Lord's Supper for a time merely in accommodation to Jewish weakness and prejudice. Even if a great deal that was plausible could be said in support of the general position, that the permanent observance of any outward ordinances is inconsistent with the spiritual character of the Christian dispensation, it would still be a competent and valid answer to the Quakers, to undertake to prove from Scripture that it was manifestly Christ's intention that the observance of Baptism and the Lord's Supper should continue permanently in His church. And, in like manner, Papists might argue, that, if the permanent observance of these two outward ordinances is not inconsistent with the spiritual character of the Christian dispensation, neither can it be easily proved that such an inconsistency necessarily attaches to any particular view of their office or function, or of the relation subsisting between them and spiritual blessings.

I have made these observations chiefly for the purpose of

teaching the general lesson, that in estimating the truth or falsehood of a doctrine which professes to rest upon scriptural authority, the best and safest course is to examine, first and chiefly, the scriptural statements that bear most directly and immediately upon the point under consideration, instead of resting much upon mere inferences from views or principles of a somewhat general and indefinite description. Now, it cannot be said that we have in Scripture any explicit statements, bearing very directly and immediately upon the precise question of what is the design and effect of the sacraments, and of whether or not there subsists an invariable connection between the observance of them and the reception of spiritual blessings. The Scriptures, indeed, contain nothing bearing very directly upon the topics usually discussed in systems of theology, under the head, *De Sacramentis in genere*. They tell us nothing directly about the general subject of sacraments, as such ; but the New Testament sets before us two outward ordinances, and two only,—the observance of which is of permanent obligation in the Christian church, and which both manifestly possess the general character of being means of grace, or of being connected, in some way or other, with the communication and the reception of spiritual blessings. As these ordinances evidently occupy a peculiar place of their own in the general plan of the Christian system, and in the arrangements of the Christian church, it is natural and reasonable to inquire what materials there are in Scripture for adopting any general conclusions as to their nature, design, and efficacy, that may be equally applicable to them both ; and what is usually given as the definition or description of *a sacrament*, or of the sacraments, is just an embodiment of what can be collected or deduced from Scripture as being equally predicable of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Under this general head, the question to which we have had occasion to refer may very reasonably be broached,—namely, Does the Scripture represent the observance of these ordinances as *necessary* to the enjoyment of any spiritual blessings ? does it contain any materials which establish an invariable connection between the observance of them, and the reception and possession of anything needful for men's salvation ? And in considering this question, we must first examine the scriptural materials that seem to bear upon it most directly and immediately.

Now, this brings us back to the consideration of the topics



formerly adverted to, as those on which the settlement of this subject depends. Protestants, as I have said, maintain that it is a scriptural doctrine, that the only thing on which the possession of spiritual blessings absolutely and invariably depends, is union to Christ; and that the only thing on which union to Christ depends, is faith in Him. As soon as, and in every instance in which, men are united to Christ by faith, they receive justification and regeneration; while without, or apart from, personal union to Christ by faith, these blessings are never conferred or received. Every one who is justified and regenerated, is certainly admitted into heaven whether he be baptized or not, and whether he have performed any actual good works or not, as was undoubtedly exhibited in the case of the thief whom the Redeemer saved upon the cross. In saying that the possessing of spiritual blessings, and the attaining to the everlasting enjoyment of God, depend absolutely and universally upon union to Christ through faith, and upon nothing else, we do not of course mean to deny the importance and obligation either of sacraments or of good works in their proper order and connection, and upon legitimate scriptural grounds. It is undoubtedly *the imperative duty* of every one not only to repent, but to bring forth fruits meet for repentance,—to obey the whole law of God; and when these fruits,—this obedience,—are not manifested whenever an opportunity is afforded in providence of manifesting them, this of itself is a universally conclusive proof that the blessings of justification and regeneration have not been bestowed, and that, of course, men are still in their sins, subject to God's wrath and curse. In like manner, the sacraments are of imperative obligation; it is a duty incumbent upon men to observe them, when the means and opportunity of doing so are afforded them, so that it is sinful to neglect or disregard them. But there is nothing in all this in the least inconsistent with the position, that union to Christ by faith infallibly and in every instance secures men's eternal welfare, by conveying or imparting justification and regeneration, even though they may not have been baptized, or have performed any good works.

The Council of Trent\* insinuated that the Reformers taught that the sacraments "*non esse ad salutem necessaria, sed superflua.*" The Reformers never denied that the sacraments were necessary

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\* Session vii., Can. iv.

in the sense that has now been explained,—that is, that they were matters of imperative obligation,—and they never alleged that they were superfluous. Calvin's remark upon the canon which we have just quoted is this, "Facile patiar, ut quæ nobis Christus dedit salutis adjuncta, eorum usus necessarius dicatur: quando scilicet datur facultas. Quanquam semper admonendi sunt fideles, non aliam esse cujusvis sacramenti necessitatem, quàm instrumentalis causæ, cui nequaquam alliganda est Dei virtus. Vocem sanè illam nemo pius est qui non toto pectore exhorreat, res esse superfluas."\* Upon the subject of the *necessity* of the sacraments, Protestant divines have been accustomed to employ this distinction, and it brings out their meaning very clearly,—viz., that they are necessary, *ex necessitate præcepti*, non *ex necessitate medi*: necessary, *ex necessitate præcepti*, because the observance of them is commanded or enjoined, and must therefore be practised by all who have in providence an opportunity of doing so, so that the voluntary neglect or disregard of them is sinful; but not necessary *ex necessitate medi*, or in such a sense that the mere fact of men not having actually observed them either produces or proves the non-possession of spiritual blessings,—either excludes men from heaven, or affords any evidence that they will not, in point of fact, be admitted there. Regeneration or conversion is necessary both *ex necessitate præcepti* and *ex necessitate medi*; it is necessary not merely because it is commanded or enjoined, so that the neglect of it is sinful, but because the result cannot, from the nature of the case, be attained without it,—because it holds true absolutely and universally, in point of fact, and in the case of each individual of our race, that "except we be born again, we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." †

Now, the question comes virtually to this, Can a similar necessity be established in regard to the sacraments? And here comes in the argument upon which Papists and Tractarians rest their case. They scarcely allege that there is any evidence in Scripture bearing upon the necessity (*ex necessitate medi*) of the sacraments generally, or of the two sacraments the observance of which Protestants admit to be obligatory, singly and separately. But they assert that, in regard to one of them,—viz., Baptism,—they can

\* Antidot., sess. vii., in Canon iv.

† The Reformers and Theology of the Reformation, p. 235. (Edrs.)

prove from Scripture that it is invariably connected with justification and regeneration, so that those who are not baptized do not receive or possess these blessings, and that those who are baptized do, universally in the case of infants, and in the case of adults whenever men are suitably disposed and prepared to receive them, —the preparation required not being very formidable. Now, this is a perfectly fair argument ; and though there is a very large amount of presumption or probability from Scripture against its truth, both in general considerations and in specific statements, there is perhaps nothing which can at once and *a priori* disprove its truth, or deprive it of a right to be examined upon its own proper professed grounds. The establishment of the position, however, it should be observed, would not prove anything in regard to the sacraments in general, or entitle us to put a statement, asserting the invariable connection between the sacraments and grace or spiritual blessings, into the general definition or description of a sacrament. It would establish nothing about what is called the sacramental principle. In order to effect this, the same general position must be established *separately and independently* about the Lord's Supper, and about any other ordinance for which the character and designation of a sacrament are claimed ; for the sacramental principle, rightly understood, whatever may be the definition or description given of it, is just that, and neither more nor less, which *can be proved from Scripture* to attach to, and to be predicable of, each and all of the ordinances to which the name sacrament may be applied. But though the general doctrine of Papists and Tractarians about the design and effect of the sacraments could not be proved merely by this process, still it would be a great matter for them if they could establish from Scripture the more limited position, that Baptism is the instrumental cause of justification ; and that, according to God's arrangements, there subsists an invariable connection between the outward ordinance of baptism, and the communication and reception of forgiveness and renovation ; and it may therefore be proper to make a few remarks upon the evidence they adduce to this effect.

*Sec. II.—Baptismal Regeneration.*

We have seen that Papists and Tractarians assert an invariable connection between the observance of the sacraments and the pos-

session of spiritual blessings, and even ascribe to the sacraments an important amount of actual influence upon the production of the result; maintaining that they confer grace *ex opere operato*, by an intrinsic power or virtue which God has bestowed upon them, and which operates invariably when men do not put a bar in the way of their operation,—that is, as it is usually explained by Romish writers, when men are free at the time of their participation in the sacrament of a *present intention* of committing sin. The Tractarians, indeed, have not formally committed themselves to the language of the Council of Trent upon the subject of the *opus operatum*; but they teach the whole substance of what is intended by it, and, generally, inculcate as high views of the efficacy of the sacraments as the Church of Rome has ever propounded,—as is evident from the extracts already quoted from Mr Newman, in which he, while still a minister of the Church of England, explicitly ascribed the whole efficacy of faith in justification to baptism, and declared that “baptism makes faith justifying.”

Protestants in general, on the contrary, regard the sacraments as signs and seals of the covenant of grace, signifying and representing in themselves, as symbols appointed by God, Christ and His benefits, and the scriptural truths which set them forth, and expressing, in the participation of them by individuals, their *previous* reception of Christ and His benefits by faith,—operating beneficially only in those in whom faith already exists, and producing the beneficial effect of confirming and sealing the truths and blessings of the gospel to the individual only through the medium of the faith which participation in them expresses. There is nothing like evidence in Scripture in favour of the general doctrine of an invariable connection between participation of the sacraments and the reception of spiritual blessings; and, indeed, as I have explained, there is nothing said in Scripture directly about sacraments in general, or about a sacrament as such. The only plausible evidence which Papists and Tractarians have to produce upon this point, is to be found in those passages which seem to establish an invariable connection between baptism on the one hand, and regeneration and salvation on the other. I cannot enter upon a detailed examination of these passages; but a few general observations will be sufficient to indicate the leading grounds on which Protestants have maintained that they do not warrant the conclusions which Romanists and Tractarians have



deduced from them; and that, on the contrary, to adopt the language of our Confession,\* “grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto” baptism, “as that no person can be regenerated or saved without it, or that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated.”

We remark, first, that, in opposition to the Popish and Tractarian view of an invariable connection between baptism and regeneration, and in support of the doctrine just quoted from our Confession of Faith, there is a large amount of scriptural evidence, both in general principles and in specific statements, which, though it may not amount to strict and conclusive proof, so as to entitle us to reject as incompetent any attempt to rebut the conclusion to which it points by an offer of direct scriptural evidence on the other side, is yet quite sufficient to require us to maintain this conclusion as a part of God’s revealed truth, *unless* it be disproved by very clear, direct, and cogent scriptural proofs, and to authorize us to direct our attention, in considering the proofs that may be adduced upon the other side, to this special point,—viz., to show that they do not *necessarily require* the construction put upon them, and to reckon it quite sufficient for the establishment of our doctrine when we can show this.†

We remark, in the second place, that the sacraments have manifestly, and by universal admission, a symbolical character,—that they are signs or representations of something signified or represented. And if this be so, then there is an obvious foundation laid, in accordance with the practice of all languages and the usage of the sacred writers, for a sort of interchange between the terms properly applicable to the sign, and those properly applicable to the thing signified,—for a certain promiscuous use of the expressions applicable to these two things. Our Confession of Faith ‡ lays down this position: “There is in every sacrament a spiritual relation, or sacramental union, between the sign and the thing signified; whence it comes to pass, that the names and effects of the one are attributed to the other;” and as this general position can be established, partly *a priori* from general views about the nature and objects of the sacraments which are admitted by all

\* C. xxviii., s. v.

† I cannot enter upon the proof of this important general position. There is a masterly summary of it in Turre-

tine, Loc. xix., Qu. viii. De efficacia Sacramentorum.

‡ C. xxvii., s. ii.

parties, and partly by general considerations of a philological kind, which cannot reasonably be disputed, we are entitled to apply it to the interpretation of the scriptural passages in which baptism may be spoken of, or referred to, as if it were virtually identical with the faith or regeneration which it signifies or represents.

We remark, in the third place, that participation in the ordinance of baptism is an imperative duty incumbent upon all who are enabled to believe in Christ and to turn to God through Him, which it is assumed that they will at once proceed, if they have an opportunity in providence, to discharge, not merely as a duty required by God's authority, but also as a suitable expression and appropriate evidence of the change that has been wrought in their views and principles; and, moreover, that the New Testament, in its general references to this subject, having respect principally and primarily, as I have explained, to the case of adult baptism, usually assumes that the profession made in baptism corresponds with the reality of the case,—that is, with the previous existence of faith and union to Christ, and deals with it upon this assumption. All these general considerations, when brought to bear upon the interpretation of the passages usually produced by Papists and Tractarians in support of their doctrine upon this subject, afford abundant materials for enabling us to prove that these passages do not *require*, and therefore upon principles already explained, do not *admit*, of a construction which would make them sanction the notion that there is an invariable connection between baptism and regeneration, or even—what, however, is only a part of the general doctrine of an invariable connection—that none are regenerated or saved without baptism.

Some of the passages commonly adduced in support of the Popish and Tractarian doctrine upon this subject, contain, *in gremio*, statements which not only disprove their interpretation of the particular passage, but afford a key to the explanation of other passages of a similar kind. It is said, for instance,\*—“the like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God).” Now here, indeed, as in one or two other passages, baptism is said to save us; but then a formal ex-

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\* 1 Pet. iii. 21.

planation is given of what this statement means ; and it just amounts in substance to this, that it is not the outward ordinance of baptism, or anything which an outward ordinance is either fitted or intended to effect, to which this result is to be ascribed, but the reality of that of which baptism is the figure,—the sincerity of the profession which men make when they ask and receive the ordinance of baptism for themselves.

The only passage of those usually quoted by Papists and Tractarians in support of their doctrine of baptismal regeneration, which seems to bear with anything like explicitness upon the conclusion they are anxious to establish, is the declaration of our Saviour,\* “Except a man be born again of *water* and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” Protestants have usually contended that our Lord did not here speak of baptism at all, any more than He spoke of the Lord’s Supper in the discourse recorded in the sixth chapter of the same Gospel ; and they have no great difficulty in proving *this* much at least, which is all that the condition of the argument requires of them,—namely, *that it cannot be proved* that the water of which our Lord here speaks was intended by Him to describe the outward ordinance of baptism.

There is one of the passages commonly adduced by Papists and Tractarians, which, while it gives no real countenance to their doctrine, affords a very clear indication of the true state of the case in regard to this matter, and of what it is that Scripture really meant to convey to us concerning it. It is the record of the commission given by our Lord to His apostles after His resurrection, as contained in the sixteenth verse of the sixteenth chapter of Mark’s Gospel, where we find that, after directing them to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, our Saviour added, “He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved ;” (here Papists and Tractarians commonly stop in quoting the passage, but our Lord goes on), “he that believeth not, shall be damned.” None can fail to be struck with the very remarkable contrast between the two different portions of this declaration,—the manifestly intentional, and very pointed, omission of any reference to baptism in the second part of it. Had the first part of it stood alone, it might have seemed to countenance the idea

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\* John iii. 5.

that baptism was just as necessary to salvation, and as invariable an accompaniment of it, as faith, although even in that case a more direct and explicit statement would have been necessary to make it a conclusive proof of this position. Had it been followed up by the declaration, "He that believeth not, *and is not baptized*, shall be damned," the Popish doctrine might have been regarded as established. But when we find that our Saviour, in so very marked and pointed a manner, dropped all reference to baptism in stating the converse of His first declaration, and connected condemnation only with the want of faith, the conviction is forced upon us, that He did so for the express purpose of indicating that He did not intend to teach that there was an invariable connection between salvation and baptism, though there certainly was between salvation and faith; and that He was careful to say nothing that might lead men to believe that the want of baptism excluded from the kingdom of heaven. The combination of baptism with faith, in the first part of the declaration, is easily explained by those general considerations which were formerly stated, and which warrant us in saying that, even had it stood alone, it would not have *necessarily* implied more than what all Protestants admit,—namely, that it was our Lord's intention that baptism should be set forth by His apostles as not less really obligatory with faith as a matter of duty, and was therefore usually to be expected in all who were enabled to believe as the certain consequence in all ordinary circumstances,—the appropriate and incumbent expression of their faith.\*

If there be nothing in Scripture adequate to establish the doctrine of an invariable connection between baptism and the spiritual blessings of forgiveness and regeneration,—but, on the contrary, much to disprove it,—it is *still more* clear and certain that the Popish doctrine, that the sacraments confer grace *ex opere operato*, is destitute of any authority, and ought to be decidedly rejected. Even if the doctrine of an invariable connection between the sacraments and spiritual blessings could be established, as we have shown it cannot, it would still require *additional and independent* scriptural evidence to show that the *sacraments* confer grace *ex opere operato*; while, on the other hand, the refutation of the doctrine of an invariable connection overturns at once that of the

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\* See an able discussion of this subject in Turretine, Loc. xix., Qu. xiii.



*opus operatum*, and removes the only ground on which any attempt to prove it could be based. It should also be observed, that this doctrine with respect to the efficacy of the sacraments is much more directly and explicitly inconsistent with great scriptural truths, as to the principles that regulate the communication of spiritual blessings to men, than that merely of an invariable connection,—as is evident from this consideration, that this doctrine of the *opus operatum* ascribes to outward ordinances an influence and an efficacy in procuring forgiveness which the Scripture does not ascribe even to faith itself,—the only thing existing in men, or done by them, by which they are ever said in Scripture to be justified. Baptism, according to the Church of Rome, is the instrumental cause of justification, while faith is merely one of seven virtues, as they are called, which only prepare or dispose men to receive it; and a mere wish to receive the sacraments is represented as one of those six other virtues, each of which has just as much influence or efficacy as faith in procuring or obtaining justification,—the sacrament itself, of course, upon the principle of the *opus operatum*, having more influence or efficacy in producing the result than all these virtues put together; while, on the other hand, the Protestant doctrine, though assigning to faith, in the matter of justification, a function and an influence possessed and exerted by nothing else, does not ascribe to it any proper efficiency of its own in the production of the result, but represents it only as the instrument receiving what has been provided and is offered.

The subject of the sacraments forms a most important department in the system of Romanists. Their whole doctrine upon the sacraments in general,—their nature, objects, efficacy, and number,—their peculiar doctrines and practices in regard to each of their seven sacraments individually,—all tend most powerfully to corrupt and pervert the doctrine of Scripture with respect to the grounds of a sinner's salvation, and the way and manner in which God communicates to men spiritual blessings, as well as to foster and confirm some natural tendencies of the human heart, which are most dangerous to men's spiritual welfare. The effects which they ascribe to the sacraments in general and individually,—the five spurious sacraments they have invented without any warrant from Scripture,—and the load of ceremonies with which they have clothed those simple, unpretending ordinances which Christ appointed,—all tend most powerfully to promote the two great ob-

jects which the Romish system is fitted to advance,—namely, first, to lead men to reject the gospel method of salvation, and to follow out for themselves a plan of procedure opposed to its fundamental principles; and, secondly, to make men, in so far as they sincerely submit to the authority and receive the doctrines of their church, the abject slaves of the priest, by representing them as dependent, for the possession of spiritual blessings, upon acts which the priest alone can perform, and by ascribing to these acts of his an important influence in procuring for them the spiritual blessings they need. Some Romish writers have indulged their imaginations in drawing fanciful analogies from a variety of sources in support of these seven sacraments; while others have produced glowing eulogies upon the bountiful kindness and liberality of holy mother church in providing so many sacraments and so many ceremonies to supply all their spiritual wants, and to afford them spiritual assistance and comfort in all varieties of circumstances, upon all leading emergencies from their birth till their death,—baptism when they come into the world to take away all original sin, both its guilt and its power,—confirmation to strengthen and uphold them in the right path when they are growing up towards manhood,—penance and the eucharist during all their lives whenever they need them, the one to wash away all their sins, and the other to afford them spiritual nourishment,—and their extreme unction when they draw near to death.\*

The leading aspect in which these ordinances, as represented and practised in the Church of Rome, ought to be regarded, is in relation to the scriptural authority on which their observance and obligation, and the effects ascribed to them either expressly or by implication, rest, and the bearing of the doctrines and practices of the Church of Rome upon these points—on men's mode of thinking, feeling, and acting with reference to the only way of a sinner's salvation revealed in the word of God; and the conclusion to which we come when we contemplate the Popish doctrines and practices in this aspect, is, that they are wholly unsanctioned by, nay, decidedly opposed to, the word of God, and unspeakably dangerous to men's eternal welfare,—as having the most direct and powerful tendency to lead men to trust, in matters which con-

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\* Bellarmin. de Sacramentis in genere, Lib. ii., c. xxvi. Moehler's Symbolism, vol. i., p. 297.

cern their everlasting peace, to their fellow-men and to external observances, instead of trusting to the person and the work of Christ as the only ground of their hope, and looking to the state of their hearts and motives as the only satisfactory *evidence* that they are in a condition of safety. But it is impossible not to be struck also with the great skill and ingenuity, with which all these observances and inventions are adapted to increase and strengthen the control of the church and the priesthood over the minds and consciences of men. Sacraments are provided for all the leading eras or stages in men's lives, and such representations are given of their nature and effects, as are best fitted to impress men with the deepest sense of the obligation and advantages of partaking in them. This tendency is brought out with increasing clearness when we advert to the two other sacraments which the Church of Rome has invented,—viz., holy orders and marriage: the first manifestly intended,—that is, so far as the ascription of a sacramental character is concerned,—to increase the respect and veneration entertained for the priesthood; and the second being just as manifestly intended to bring under the more direct and absolute control of the priesthood, a relation which exerts, directly and indirectly, so extensive and powerful an influence upon men individually, and upon society at large. If Popery be Satan's masterpiece, the theory and practice of the sacraments may perhaps be regarded as the most finished and perfect department in this great work of his. And it is not in the least surprising, that when recently the great adversary set himself to check and overturn the scriptural and evangelical principles which were gaining a considerable influence in the Church of England, he should have chiefly made use of the sacramental principle for effecting his design,—that is, the principle that there is an invariable connection between participation in the sacraments and the enjoyment of spiritual blessings, and that the sacraments have an inherent power or virtue whereby they produce these appropriate effects. In no other way, and by no other process, could he have succeeded to such an extent as he has done, in leading men to disregard and despise all that Scripture teaches us concerning our helpless and ruined condition by nature; concerning the necessity of a regeneration of our moral nature by the power of the Holy Spirit; concerning the way and manner in which, according to the divine method of justification, pardon and acceptance have

been procured and are bestowed ; concerning the place and function of faith in the salvation of sinners, and concerning the true elements and distinguishing characteristics of all those things that accompany salvation,—and, finally, in no other way could he have succeeded to such an extent in leading men who had been ministers in a Protestant church to submit openly and unreservedly to that system of doctrine and practice which is immeasurably better fitted than any other to accomplish his purposes, by leading men to build wholly upon a false foundation, and to reject the counsel of God against themselves ; while it is better fitted than any other to retain men in the most degrading, and, humanly speaking, the most hopeless bondage.

*Sec. III.—Popish View of the Lord's Supper.*

It is proper, before leaving this subject, to advert to the special importance of the place which the Lord's Supper,—or the sacrament of the altar, as Romanists commonly call it,—holds in the Popish system, and the peculiar magnitude of the corruptions which they have introduced into it. This forms the very heart and marrow of the Popish system, and brings out summarily and compendiously all the leading features by which it is characterized. In a general survey of the doctrine and practice of the Church of Rome upon this subject, we meet first with the monstrous doctrine of transubstantiation, which requires us to believe that, by the words of consecration pronounced by the priest, the bread and wine are changed, as to their substance, into the real flesh and blood of Christ,—the bread and wine altogether ceasing to exist, except in appearance only, and these being given to the partaker instead of the actual flesh and blood of the Redeemer. This doctrine not only contradicts the senses and the reason, but it cannot possibly be received until both the senses and the reason have been put entirely in abeyance. The imposition of the belief of this doctrine may not unjustly be regarded as a sort of experimental test of how far it is possible for the human intellect to be degraded by submitting to receive what contradicts the first principles of rational belief, and overturns the certainty of all knowledge. The manifest tendency of the inculcation of such a doctrine is to sink the human intellect into thorough and absolute slavery, or, by a natural reaction, to involve it in universal and



hopeless scepticism. Both these ruinous results have been fully developed in the history of the Church of Rome. There this doctrine of transubstantiation is made the basis of the foundation of some deadly corruptions of the fundamental principles of Christian truth, and of some gross practical frauds and abuses. It is the foundation of the adoration of the host, or the paying of divine worship to the consecrated wafer,—a practice which, on scriptural principles, is not saved from the guilt of idolatry by the mistaken *belief* that it is the real flesh of Christ. It is the foundation also of the doctrine and practice of the sacrifice of the mass,—that is, of the offering up by the priest of the flesh and blood of Christ, or of the bread and wine alleged to be transubstantiated into Christ's flesh and blood, as a proper propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead. The mass is the great idol of Popery, and it presents a marvellous and most daring combination of what is false, profane, and blasphemous,—of what is dishonouring to Christ, and injurious to men, both as pertaining to the life that now is and that which is to come. It dishonours and degrades the one perfect and all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ, by representing it as repeated, or rather caricatured, daily and hourly by the juggling mummery of a priest. It tends directly to lead men to build their hopes of pardon upon a false foundation; and the whole regulations and practices of the Church of Rome in connection with it, are manifestly fitted and intended to impose upon men's credulity, and to cheat them out of their liberty and their property. The celebration of mass for their benefit is made a regular article of merchandise; and, by the device of private or solitary masses, the priests are enabled to raise much money for masses, which of course they never perform.

These hints may be sufficient to show that the whole subject of the doctrine and practice of the Church of Rome in regard to the Eucharist, or the sacrament of the altar, is well worthy of being carefully investigated and thoroughly known, as presenting an epitome of the whole system of Popery,—of the dishonour done by it to the only true God and the only Saviour of sinners, and of its injurious bearing both on the temporal and spiritual welfare of men.\*

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\* For the Protestant view of the | sacraments in general, see "The Re- | formers and Theology of the Refor- | mation," pp. 231, etc. (Edrs.)

*Sec. IV.—Infant Baptism.*

The Reformers, and the great body of Protestant divines, in putting forth the definition of the sacraments in general, or of a sacrament as such, intended to embody the substance of what they believe Scripture to teach, or to indicate, as equally applicable to both sacraments; and in laying down what they believe concerning the general objects and the ordinary effects of the sacraments, they commonly *assume*, that the persons partaking in them are rightly qualified for receiving and improving them,—and further; and more specially, that the persons baptized are adults. It is necessary to keep these considerations in view in interpreting the general description given of sacraments and of baptism, in our Confession of Faith and the other Reformed confessions; and with these assumptions, and to this extent, there is no difficulty in the way of our maintaining the general principle, which can be established by most satisfactory evidence,—namely, that the fundamental spiritual blessings, on the possession of which the salvation of men universally depends,—justification and regeneration by faith,—are not conveyed through the instrumentality of the sacraments, but that, on the contrary, they must *already* exist before even baptism can be lawfully or safely received. The general tenor of Scripture language upon the subject of baptism applies primarily and directly to the baptism of adults, and proceeds upon the assumption, that the profession implied in the reception of baptism by adults,—the profession, that is, that they had already been led to believe in Christ, and to receive Him as their Saviour and their Master,—was sincere, or corresponded with the real state of their minds and hearts. It is necessary, therefore, to form our primary and fundamental conceptions of the objects and effects of baptism in itself, as a distinct subject, and in its bearing upon the general doctrine of the sacraments, from the baptism of adults, and not of infants. The baptisms which are ordinarily described or referred to in the New Testament, were the baptisms of men who had lived as Jews and heathens, and who, having been led to believe in Christ,—or, at least, to profess faith in Him,—expressed and sealed this faith, or the profession of it, by complying with Christ's requirement, that they should be baptized. This is the proper, primary, full idea of baptism; and to this the general tenor of Scripture language

upon the subject, and the general description of the objects and ends of baptism, *as given in our Confession of Faith*, and in the other confessions of the Reformed churches, are manifestly adapted.

As, in the condition in which we are placed in providence, we but seldom witness the baptism of adults, and commonly see only the baptism of infants,—and as there are undoubtedly some difficulties in the way of applying fully to the baptism of infants the definition usually given of a sacrament, and the general account commonly set forth of the objects and ends of baptism,—we are very apt to be led to form insensibly very erroneous and defective views of the nature and effects of baptism, as an ordinance instituted by Christ in His church, or rather, to rest contented with scarcely any distinct or definite conception upon the subject. Men usually have much more clear and distinct apprehensions of the import, design, and effects of the Lord's Supper than of Baptism; and yet the general definition commonly given of a sacrament applies equally to both, being just intended to embody the substance of what Scripture indicates as equally applicable to the one ordinance as to the other. If we were in the habit of witnessing adult baptism, and if we formed our primary and full conceptions of the import and effects of the ordinance from the baptism of adults, the one sacrament would be as easily understood, and as definitely apprehended, as the other; and we would have no difficulty in seeing how the general definition given of the sacraments in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms applied equally to both. But as this general definition of sacraments, and the corresponding general description given of the objects and effects of baptism, *do not apply fully and without some modification* to the form in which we usually see baptism administered, men commonly, instead of considering distinctly what are the necessary modifications of it, and what are the grounds on which these modifications rest, leave the whole subject in a very obscure and confused condition in their minds.

These statements may, at first view, appear to be large concessions to the anti-pædo-baptists, or those who oppose the lawfulness of the baptism of infants, and to affect the solidity of the grounds on which the practice of pædo-baptism, which has ever prevailed almost universally in the church of Christ, is based. But I am persuaded that a more careful consideration of the subject will

show that these views, besides being clearly sanctioned by Scripture, and absolutely necessary for the consistent and intelligible interpretation of our own standards, are, in their legitimate application, fitted to deprive the arguments of the anti-pædo-baptists of whatever plausibility they possess. It cannot be reasonably denied that they have much that is plausible to allege in opposition to infant baptism; but I am persuaded that the plausibility of their arguments will always appear greatest to men who have not been accustomed to distinguish between the primary and complete idea of this ordinance, as exhibited in the baptism of adults, and the distinct and peculiar place which is held by the special subject of infant baptism, and the precise grounds on which *it* rests. Pædo-baptists, from the causes to which I have referred, are apt to rest contented with very obscure and defective notions of the import and objects of baptism, and to confound adult and infant baptism as if the same principles must fully and universally apply to both. And in this state of things, when those views of the sacraments in general, and of baptism in particular, which I have briefly explained, are pressed upon their attention, and seen and acknowledged to be well founded, they are not unlikely to imagine that these principles equally rule the case of infant baptism; and they are thus prepared to see, in the arguments of the anti-pædo-baptists, a much larger amount of force and solidity than they really possess. Hence the importance of being familiar with what should be admitted or conceded, as clearly sanctioned by Scripture, with respect to baptism in general, in its primary, complete idea,—estimating exactly what this implies, and how far it goes; and then, moreover, being well acquainted with the special subject of infant baptism as a distinct topic,—with the *peculiar* considerations applicable to it, and the precise grounds on which its lawfulness and obligation can be established.

It is not my purpose to enter upon a full discussion of infant baptism, or an exposition of the grounds on which the views of pædo-baptists can, as I believe, be successfully established and vindicated. I shall merely make a few observations on what it is that pædo-baptists really maintain,—on the distinct and peculiar place which the doctrine of infant baptism truly occupies,—and on the relation in which it stands to the general subject of baptism and the sacraments; believing that correct apprehensions upon these points are well fitted to illustrate the grounds on which



infant baptism rests in all their strength, and the insufficiency of the reasons by which the opposite view has been supported.

Let me then, in the first place, remark that intelligent pædo-baptists hold all those views of the sacraments and of baptism which I have endeavoured to explain, and are persuaded that they can hold them in perfect consistency with maintaining that the infants of believing parents ought to be baptized. There is nothing in these views peculiar to the anti-pædo-baptists; and there is, we are persuaded, no real advantage which they can derive from them in support of their opinions. These views are clearly sanctioned by our Confession of Faith; while, at the same time, it contains also the following proposition as a part of what the word of God teaches upon the subject of baptism: \* “Not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptized.” Now, let it be observed that this position is all that is essential to the doctrine of the pædo-baptists, as such. We are called upon to maintain nothing more upon the subject than this plain and simple proposition, which merely asserts the lawfulness and propriety of baptizing the infants of believing parents. Let it be noticed also, that the statement is introduced merely as an adjunct or appendage to the general doctrine of baptism; not as directly and immediately comprehended under it, any more than under the general definition given of a sacrament, but as a special addition to it, resting upon its own distinct and peculiar grounds. This is the true place which infant baptism occupies; this is the view that ought to be taken of it; and I am persuaded that it is when contemplated and investigated in this aspect, that there comes out most distinctly and palpably the sufficiency of the arguments in favour of it, and the sufficiency of the objections against it. On this, as on many other subjects, the friends of truth have often injured their cause, by entering too fully and minutely into explanations of their doctrines, for the purpose of commending them to men’s acceptance, and solving the difficulties by which they seemed to be beset. They have thus involved themselves in great difficulties, by trying to defend their own minute and unwarranted explanations, as if they were an essential part of the Scripture doctrine. It is easy enough to prove from Scripture

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\* C. xxviii., s. iv.

that the Father is God, that the Son is God, and that the Holy Ghost is God, and that they are not three Gods, but one God; but many of the more detailed explanations of the doctrine of the Trinity which have been given by its friends, have been untenable and indefensible, and have only laid it open unnecessarily to the attacks of its enemies. In like manner, we think it no difficult matter to produce from Scripture sufficient and satisfactory evidence of the position, that the infants of believing parents are to be baptized; but minute and detailed expositions of the reasons and the effects of infant baptism are unwarranted by Scripture: they impose an unnecessary burden upon the friends of truth, and tend only to give an advantage to its opponents. The condition and fate of infants, and the principles by which they are determined, have always been subjects on which men, not unnaturally, have been prone to speculate, but on which Scripture has given us little *explicit* information beyond this, that salvation through Christ is just as accessible to them as to adults. One form in which this tendency to speculate unwarrantably about infants has been exhibited, is that of inventing theories about the objects and effects of infant baptism. These theories are often made to rest as a burden upon the scriptural proof of the lawfulness and propriety of the mere practice itself; and thus have the appearance of communicating to that proof, which is amply sufficient for its own proper object, their own essential weakness and invalidity.

It is manifest that, from the nature of the case, the principles that determine and indicate the objects and effects of baptism in adults and infants, cannot be altogether the same; and the great difficulty of the whole subject lies in settling, as far as we can, what modifications our conceptions of baptism should undergo in the case of infants, as distinguished from that of adults; and, at the same time, to show that, even with these modifications, the essential and fundamental ideas involved in the general doctrine ordinarily professed concerning baptism are still preserved. The investigation even of this point is, perhaps, going beyond the line of what is strictly necessary for the establishment of the position, that the infants of believing parents are to be baptized. But some notice of it can scarcely be avoided in the discussion of the question.

The scriptural evidence, in support of the position that the

infants of believing parents are to be baptized, consists *chiefly* in the proof which the word of God affords, to the following effect:—that, in the whole history of our race, God's covenanted dealings with His people, with respect to spiritual blessings, have had regard to their children as well as to themselves; so that the children as well as the parents have been admitted to the spiritual blessings of God's covenants, and to the outward signs and seals of these covenants;—that there is no evidence that this general principle, so full of mercy and grace, and so well fitted to nourish faith and hope, was to be departed from, or laid aside, under the Christian dispensation; but, on the contrary, a great deal to confirm the conviction that it was to continue to be acted on;—that the children of believers are capable of receiving, and often do in fact receive, the blessings of the covenant, justification and regeneration; and are therefore—unless there be some very express prohibition, either by general principle or specific statement—admissible and entitled to the outward sign and seal of these blessings;—that there *is* a federal holiness, as distinguished from a personal holiness, attaching, under the Christian as well as the Jewish economy, to the children of believing parents, which affords a sufficient ground for their admission, by an outward ordinance, into the fellowship of the church;—and that the commission which our Saviour gave to His apostles, and the history we have of the way in which they exercised this commission, decidedly favour the conclusion, that they admitted the children of believers along with their parents, and because of their relation to their parents, into the communion of the church by baptism.

This line of argument, though in some measure inferential, is, we are persuaded, amply sufficient *in cumulo* to establish the conclusion, that the children of believing parents are to be baptized, unless *either* the leading positions of which it consists can be satisfactorily proved to have no sanction from Scripture, *or* some general position can be established which proves the incompatibility of infant baptism, either with the character of the Christian dispensation in general, or with the qualities and properties of the ordinance of baptism in particular. I do not mean to enter upon the consideration of the specific scriptural evidence in support of the different positions that constitute the proof of the lawfulness and propriety of baptizing the children of believing parents, or of the attempts which have been made to disprove

them singly, and in detail. I can only advert to the general allegation, that infant baptism is inconsistent with some of the qualities or properties of the ordinance of baptism, as it is set before us in Scripture.

It is manifestly nothing to the purpose to say, in support of this general allegation, that baptism in the case of infants cannot be, in all respects, the same as baptism in the case of adults; or, that we cannot give so full and specific an account of the objects and effects of infant as of adult baptism. These positions are certainly both true; but they manifestly concern merely incidental points, not affecting the root of the matter, and afford no ground for any such conclusion as the unlawfulness of infant baptism. In the case of the baptism of adults, we can speak clearly and decidedly as to the general objects, and the ordinary effects, of the administration of the ordinance. The adult receiving baptism is either duly qualified and suitably prepared for it, or he is not. If he is not duly qualified, his baptism is a hypocritical profession of a state of mind and heart that does not exist; and, of course, it can do him no good, but must be a sin, and, as such, must expose him to the divine displeasure. If he is duly qualified and suitably prepared, then his baptism, though it does not convey to him justification and regeneration, which he must have before received through faith, impresses upon his mind, through God's blessing, their true nature and grounds, and strengthens his faith to realize more fully his own actual condition, as an unworthy recipient of unspeakable mercies, and his obligations to live to God's praise and glory. We are unable to put any such clear and explicit *alternative* in the case of the baptism of infants, or give any very definite account of the way and manner in which it bears upon or affects them individually. Men have often striven hard in their speculations to lay down something precise and definite, in the way of general principle or standard, as to the bearing and effect of baptism in relation to the great blessings of justification and regeneration in the case of infants individually. But the Scripture really affords no adequate materials for doing this; for we have no sufficient warrant for asserting, even in regard to infants, to whom it is God's purpose to give at some time justification and regeneration, that He uniformly or ordinarily gives it to them before or at their baptism. The discomfort of this state of uncertainty, the difficulty of laying down



any definite doctrine upon this subject, has often led men to adopt one or other of two opposite extremes, which have the appearance of greater simplicity and definiteness,—that is, either to deny the lawfulness of infant baptism altogether, or to embrace the doctrine of baptismal justification and regeneration, and to represent all baptized infants, or at least all the baptized infants of believing parents, as receiving these great blessings in and with the external ordinances, or as certainly and infallibly to receive them at some future time. But this is manifestly unreasonable. “True fortitude of understanding,” according to the admirable and well-known saying of Paley, “consists in not suffering what we do know, to be disturbed by what we do not know.” And assuredly, if there be sufficient scriptural grounds for thinking that the infants of believing parents are to be baptized, it can be no adequate ground for rejecting, or even doubting, the truth of this doctrine, that we have no sufficient materials for laying down any precise or definite proposition of a general kind as to the effect of baptism in the case of infants individually.

But the leading allegation of the anti-pædo-baptists on this department of the subject is, that it is inconsistent with the nature of baptism, as set before us in Scripture, that it should be administered to any, except upon the ground of a previous possession of faith by the person receiving it. If this proposition could be established, it would, of course, preclude the baptism of infants who have not faith, and who could not profess it if they had it. We are persuaded that this proposition cannot be established, though we admit that a good deal which is plausible can be adduced from Scripture in support of it. It is admitted that all persons who are in a condition to possess and to profess faith, must possess and profess it before they can lawfully or safely receive the ordinance of baptism. This can be easily established from Scripture. It is admitted, also, that the ordinary tenor of Scripture language concerning baptism has respect, primarily and principally, to persons in this condition,—that is, to adults,—and that thus a profession of faith is *ordinarily* associated with the Scripture notices of the administration of baptism; so that, as has been explained, we are to regard baptism upon a profession of faith, as exhibiting the proper type and full development of the ordinance. Had we no other information bearing upon the subject in Scripture than what has now been referred to, this

might be fairly enough regarded as precluding the baptism of infants; but in the absence of anything which, directly or by implication, teaches that this previous profession of faith is of *the essence* of the ordinance, and universally necessary to its legitimate administration and reception, an inference of this sort is not sufficient to neutralize the direct and positive evidence we have in Scripture in favour of the baptism of infants. The only thing which seems to be really of the essence of the ordinance in this respect is, that the parties receiving it are capable of possessing, and have a federal interest in, the promise of the spiritual blessings which it was intended to signify and to seal. Now, the blessings which baptism was intended to signify and seal are justification and regeneration,—that is, the washing away of guilt, and the washing away of depravity. These, and *these alone*, are the spiritual blessings which the washing with water in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, directly signifies and represents. Faith does not stand in the same relation to baptism as these blessings do, and for this obvious and conclusive reason, that it is not directly and expressly signified or represented in the external ordinance itself, as they are.

Faith is, indeed, ordinarily, and in the case of all who are capable of it, the medium or instrument through which these indispensable blessings are conveyed; and there is certainly much better scriptural evidence in support of the necessity of faith in order to being saved, than in support of the necessity of a profession of faith in order to being baptized. But yet it is quite certain, that faith is not universally necessary in order to a right to these blessings, or to the actual possession of them. It is universally admitted that infants, though incapable of faith, are capable of salvation, and are actually saved; and they cannot be saved unless they be justified and regenerated. And since it is thus certain that infants actually receive the very blessings which baptism signifies and represents, without the presence of the faith which is necessary to the possession of these blessings in adults,—while yet the Scripture has much more explicitly connected faith and salvation than it has ever connected faith and baptism,—there can be no serious difficulty in the idea of their admissibility to the outward sign and seal of these blessings, without a previous profession of faith.

If it be said that something more than a mere capacity of

receiving the blessings which baptism signifies and represents, is necessary to warrant the administration of it, since the ordinance is, in its general nature and character, distinguishing, and it is not all infants that are admitted to it—it is not difficult to show, that not only does the admission of this general idea, as pertaining to *the essence* of the doctrine of baptism, not preclude the baptism of infants, but that we have in their case what is fairly *analogous* to the antecedently existing ground, which is the warrant or foundation of the administration of it to adults. In the case of adults, this antecedent ground or warrant is their own faith professed; and in the case of the infants of believing parents, it is their interest in the covenant which, upon scriptural principles, they possess simply as the children of believing parents,—the federal holiness which can be proved to attach to them, in virtue of God's arrangements and promises, simply upon the ground of their having been born of parents who are themselves comprehended in the covenant. If this general principle can be shown to be sanctioned by Scripture,—and we have no doubt that it can be conclusively established,—then it affords an antecedent ground or warrant for the admission of the children of believing parents to the ordinance of baptism *analogous* to that which exists in believing adults,—a ground or warrant the relevancy and validity of which cannot be affected by anything except a direct and conclusive proof of the absolute and universal necessity of a profession of faith, as the only sufficient ground or warrant, in every instance, of the administration of baptism; and no such proof has been, or can be, produced.

Calvin, in discussing this point, fully admits the necessity of some antecedent ground or warrant attaching to infants, as the foundation of admitting them to baptism; but he contends that this is to be found in the scriptural principle of the interest which the infants of believing parents have, *as such*, in virtue of God's arrangements and promises, in the covenant and its blessings. He says, “*Quo jure ad baptismum eos admittimus, nisi quòd promissionis sunt hæredes? Nisi enim jam ante ad eos pertineret vitæ promissio, baptismum profanaret, quisquis illis daret.*”\*

My chief object in these observations has been to illustrate the importance of considering and investigating the subject of infant

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\* Tractatus, p. 386. Ed. 1576.

baptism as a distinct topic, resting upon its own proper and peculiar grounds,—of estimating aright its true relation to the sacraments in general, and to baptism as a whole,—and of appreciating justly the real nature and amount of the modifications which it is necessary to introduce into the mode of stating and defending the general doctrine as to the objects and effects of baptism, in the case of infants as distinguished from adults; and I have made them, because I am persuaded that it is when the subject is viewed in this aspect, that the strength of the arguments for, and the weakness of the arguments against, infant baptism, come out most palpably, and that by following this process of investigation we shall be best preserved from any temptation to corrupt and lower the general doctrines of the sacraments,—while at the same time we shall be most fully enabled to show that infant baptism, with the difficulties which undoubtedly attach to it, and with the obscurity in which some points connected with it are involved, is really analogous in its essential features to the baptism of adults, and implies nothing that is really inconsistent with the view taught us in Scripture with respect to sacraments and ordinances in general, or with respect to baptism in particular.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE SOCINIAN CONTROVERSY.

IN the rationalistic perversion of the true principles of the Reformation, as to the investigation of divine truth and the interpretation of Scripture, we have the foundation on which Socinianism is based,—namely, the making human reason, or rather men's whole natural faculties and capacities, virtually the test or standard of truth; as if the mind of man was able fully to take in all existences and all their relations, and as if men, on this ground, were entitled to exclude, from what is admitted to be a revelation from God, everything which could not be shown to be altogether accordant with the conclusions of their own understandings, or thoroughly comprehensible by them. In regard to this principle, and the general views of theology, properly so called, which have resulted from its application, it is not always easy to determine whether the application of this peculiar *principium theologiæ* produced the peculiar theology, or the peculiar theology, previously adopted from some other cause, or on some other ground, led to the maintenance of the peculiar *principium*, as the only way by which the theology could be defended. If men had adopted rationalistic principles as their rule or standard in the investigation of divine truth and the interpretation of Scripture, they would certainly bring out, in the application of them, the Socinian system of theology; and, on the other hand, if, from any cause or influence, they had already imbibed the leading elements of the Socinian system of theology, and yet did not think it altogether safe or expedient to deny the divine origin of the Christian revelation, they must, as a matter of course, be forced to adopt, as their only means of defence, the rationalistic principle of interpretation. These two things must, from the very nature of the case, have always gone hand in hand. They could scarcely, in any

case, be separated in the order of time; and it is of no great importance to determine, in particular cases, which may have come first in the order of nature,—*which* was the cause, and which the effect. Papists allege that Socinianism was one of the consequences of the Reformation,—of the unrestrained and licentious speculations upon religious matters which they ascribe to that important event. The principles on which the Reformers acted, and on which the Reformation was based, were not the causes of, and are not responsible for, the errors and heresies which have sprung up in the Reformed churches. At the same time, it cannot be disputed, that the Reformation tended to introduce a state of society, and a general condition of things, which led to a fuller and more prominent development of error, as well as of truth, by giving freedom of thought, and freedom in the expression of opinion. In the Church of Rome, and in countries that are fully under its control, the maintenance of any other errors and heresies than those which that church sanctions, is attended with imminent danger, and leads to sacrifices which few men are disposed to make, even for what they may regard as true.

This was the condition of Christendom before the Reformation. It lay wholly under the domination of a dark and relentless despotism, the tendency and effect of which were, to prevent men from exercising their minds freely upon religious subjects, or at least from giving publicity to any views they might have been led to adopt, different from those which had the civil and ecclesiastical authorities on their side. Wherever the Reformation prevailed, this state of matters gradually changed. Despotism gave place to liberty. Liberty was sometimes abused, and this led to licentiousness. But it is not the less true that liberty is preferable to despotism, both as being in itself a more just and righteous condition of things, and as being attended with far greater advantages, and with fewer and smaller evils.

#### *Sec. I.—Origin of Socinianism.*

With respect to Socinianism in particular, there is much in the history of its origin, that not only disproves the Popish allegation of its being traceable to the principles of the Reformation, but which tends to throw back upon the Church of Rome a share, at least, of the responsibility of producing this most pernicious

heresy.\* The founders of this sect were chiefly Italians, who had been originally trained and formed under the full influence of the Church of Rome. They may be fairly regarded as specimens of the infidelity,—or free-thinking, as they themselves call it,—which the Popish system, in certain circumstances, and in minds of a certain class, has a strong tendency in the way of reaction to produce. They were men who had come, in the exercise of their natural reason, to see the folly and absurdity of much of the Popish system, without having been brought under the influence of truly religious impressions, or having been led to adopt a right method of investigating divine truth. They seem to have been men who were full of self-confidence, proud of their own powers of speculation and argument, and puffed up by a sense of their own elevation above the mass of follies and absurdities which they saw prevailing around them in the Church of Rome; and this natural tendency of the men, and the sinful state of mind which it implied or produced, were the true and proper *causes* of the errors and heresies into which they fell. Still it was the Church of Rome, in which they were trained, and the influences which it brought to bear upon them, that, in point of fact, furnished the occasions of developing this tendency, and determining the direction it took in regulating their opinions. The irrational and offensive despotism which the Church of Rome exercised in all matters of opinion, even on purely scientific subjects, tended to lead men who had become, mentally at least, emancipated from its thralldom, first and generally, to carry freedom of thought to the extreme of licentiousness; and then, more particularly, to throw off the *whole* system of doctrine which the Church of Rome imposed upon men, without being at much pains to discriminate between what was false in that system, and what might be true. This is, indeed, the true history of Socinianism,—the correct account of the causes that in fact produced it.

Lælius Socinus, who is usually regarded as the true founder of the system,—though his nephew, Faustus, was the chief defender and promulgator of it,—seems to have formed his opinions upon theological subjects before he was constrained to leave Italy, and take refuge among the Protestants, where somewhat greater freedom of opinion was tolerated. He did not certainly find

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\* Mosheim's Church History, last section of sixteenth century.

among the Reformers, with whom he came into contact, anything to encourage him in the theological views which he had imbibed; but neither was he brought, by his association with them, under any of those more wholesome influences, which would have led him to abandon them, and to embrace the great doctrines of the Reformation. He continued to manifest the same tendency, and the same disposition, which he had exhibited in Italy; and he retained the theological views which, in substance, he seems to have formed there. So that, though he published little or nothing, and did not always very fully or openly avow his peculiar opinions, even in private intercourse, yet, as there is reason to believe that he was really and substantially the author of the system afterwards developed and defended by his nephew, his history is truly the history of the origin of the system; and that history is at least sufficient to show, that Popery is much more deeply involved in the guilt of producing Socinianism than Protestantism is.

It may be worth while, both as confirming the views now given of the character and tendencies of Lælius Socinus, and also as illustrating the method often adopted by such men in *first broaching* their novel and erroneous opinions, to give one or two specimens of what the Reformers with whom he came into contact have said regarding him. He carried on for a time a correspondence with Calvin; in which, while he does not seem to have brought out distinctly the theological views afterwards called by his name, he had so fully manifested his strong tendency to indulge in all sorts of useless and pernicious speculations, as at length to draw from that great man the following noble rebuke: "You need not expect me to reply to all the monstrous questions (*portenta quæstionum*) you propose to me. If you choose to indulge in such ærial speculations, I pray you suffer me, a humble disciple of Christ, to meditate on those things which tend to the edification of my faith. And I indeed by my silence will effect what I wish,—viz., that you no longer annoy me in this way. I am greatly grieved that the fine talents which the Lord has given you, should not only be wasted on things of no importance, but spoiled by pernicious speculations. I must again seriously admonish you, as I have done before, that unless you speedily correct this *quærendi pruritum*, it may bring upon you much mischief. If I were to encourage, under the appearance of indulgence, this vice, which



I believe to be injurious, I would be acting a perfidious and cruel part to you; and therefore, I prefer that you should now be somewhat offended by my asperity, than that I should abstain from attempting to draw you away from the sweet allurements of the curiosity (or love of curious speculation) in which you are entangled. The time, I hope, will come, when you will rejoice that you were awakened from it, even by a rude shock.\*

Zanchius, too, was an Italian, and, like Socinus, had fled from that country, because it was not safe for him to remain there, in consequence of the anti-Papal views which he had adopted. But then, unlike Socinus, he was a sincere and honest inquirer after truth. He had sought and obtained the guidance of the Spirit of God. He had studied the Bible, with a single desire to know what God had there revealed, that he might receive and submit to it. And he had in this way been led to adopt the same system of theology as Calvin and the other Reformers, and proved himself an able and learned defender of it. In the preface to his work on the Trinity, or "De Tribus Elohim," as he calls it,† he thus describes Socinus: "He was of a noble family, well skilled in Greek and Hebrew, and irreproachable in his outward conduct; and on these accounts I was on friendly terms with him. But he was a man full of diverse heresies, which, however, he never proposed to me, except, as it were, for the purpose of disputation,

\* "Non est quod expectes, dum ad illa, quæ objicis, quæstionum portenta respondeam. Si tibi per aëreas illas speculationes volitare libet, sine me, quæso, humilem Christi discipulum ea meditari, quæ ad fidei meæ edificationem faciunt. Ac ego quidem silentio meo id quod cupio consequar, ne tu mihi posthac sis molestus. Liberale vero ingenium, quod tibi Dominus contulit, non modo in rebus nihili frustra occupari, sed exitialibus figmentis corrumpi vehementer dolet. Quod pridem testatus sum, serio iterum moneo: nisi hunc quærendi prurimum mature corrigas, metuumdum esse, ne tibi gravia tormenta accersas. Ego si indulgentiæ specie vitium, quod maxime noxium esse judico, alerem, in te essem perfidus et crudelis. Itaque paululum nunc mea asperitate offendi malo, quam dulci-

bus curiositatis illecebris male captum non retrahi. Erit tempus, ut spero, cum te ita violenter expergefatum fuisse gaudebis." A letter without date, but probably written in December 1551 or January 1552; See Vita F. Socini, prefixed to first edition of Bib. Frat. Polon. Przypcovius, the author of this Life of Faustus Socinus, professes to give this extract from Calvin's MS., which he had before him. There are similar indications of his character in Calvin's letters to him, published in his Epistolæ (opera, tom. ix., pp. 51, 57, 197). This letter is given in an English translation, in Bonnet's edition of the Letters of Calvin, vol. ii., p. 315. Bonnet says that it is "published here for the first time." He professes to give it from a Latin copy in the Library of Geneva.

† Published in 1572.

and always putting questions as if he wished for information. And yet for many years he greatly promoted the Samosatanean heresy, and led many to adopt it.”\*

Such was the origin of Socinianism, and such, to a large extent, has been the kind of men by whom it has been advocated, although many of them have been fortunate enough to find themselves in circumstances that rendered it unnecessary to have recourse to the policy and management which its founder adopted, as to the mode of bringing out his opinions.

### *Sec. II.—Socinian Views as to Scripture.*

The Socinians differ from the great body of Christians in regard to the subject of the *inspiration* of the sacred Scriptures. This was to be expected; for, as they had made up their minds not to regulate their views of doctrinal matters by the natural and obvious meaning of the statements contained in Scripture, it was quite probable that they would try to depreciate the value and authority of the Bible, so far as this was not plainly inconsistent with professing a belief, in any sense, in the truth of Christianity. The position, accordingly, which they maintain upon this point is, that the Bible contains, indeed, a revelation from God, but that it is not itself that revelation, or that it is not, in any proper sense, the word of God, though the word of God is found in it. They virtually discard the Old Testament altogether, as having now no value or importance but what is merely historical. And, indeed, they commonly teach, that the promise of eternal life was not revealed, and was wholly unknown, under the Old Testament dispensation; but was conveyed to man, for the first time, by Christ Himself, when He appeared on earth: men, under the patriarchal and Mosaic economies, having been, according to this view, very much in the same situation as the mass of mankind in general,—that is, being called upon to work out their own eternal happiness by their own good deeds, though having only a very imperfect knowledge of God, and of the worship and duty which He required, and having only a general confidence in His goodness and mercy, without any certainty or assurance as to their final destiny. Jesus Christ, according to Socinians, was a mere man, who was

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\* Zanchii opera, tom. i., Genev. 1619.

appointed by God to convey His will more fully to men; and the *sole* object of His mission was to communicate to men more correct and complete information concerning God and duty,—and especially to convey to them the assurance of a future state of blessedness, to be enjoyed by all who should do what they could in worshipping and serving God, according to the information He had communicated to them.

They profess, then, to receive as true, upon this ground, all that Christ Himself taught. They admit that the teaching of Christ is, in the main, and as to its substance, correctly enough set forth in the New Testament; and they do not allege that it can be learned from any other source. But then, as to the *books* which compose the New Testament, they maintain that they were the unaided compositions of the men whose names they bear; and deny that they, the authors, had any special supernatural assistance or superintendence from God in the production of them. They look on the evangelists simply as honest and faithful historians, who had good opportunities of knowing the subjects about which they wrote, and who intended to relate everything accurately, as far as their opportunities and memories served them; but who, having nothing but their own powers and faculties to guide them, may be supposed, like other historians, to have fallen sometimes into inadvertencies and errors. And as to the apostles of our Lord, whose writings form part of the canon of the New Testament, or the substance of whose teaching is there recorded, they commonly deny to them any infallible supernatural guidance, and admit that they were well acquainted with the views of their Master, and intended faithfully to report them, and to follow them in their own preaching. But they think that the apostles probably sometimes misunderstood or misapprehended them; and that they are not to be implicitly followed in the reasonings or illustrations they employed to enforce their teaching,—an observation, of course, specially directed against the Apostle Paul.

With these views of the apostles and evangelists, and of the books of the New Testament, they think themselves warranted in using much greater liberty with its words and language, in the way of labouring to force them into an accordance with their system of theology, than can be regarded as at all warrantable by those who believe that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God,—that holy men wrote as they were moved by the Spirit of

God. Socinians are also fond of dwelling upon all those topics which seem fitted to shake in men's minds a due sense of the reverence with which the sacred Scriptures ought, as being the word of God, to be regarded,—such as the obscurity attaching to some of their statements, and the difficulty of ascertaining their true meaning; the various readings; and the difficulty in some cases of ascertaining the true text; the apparent inconsistencies, and the difficulty occasionally of reconciling them. In discussing these and similar topics, they follow the example of the Papists,—treat them commonly in the same light or semi-infidel spirit; and their general object is the same,—namely, to insinuate the unfitness of the Bible, as it stands, to be a full and accurate directory of faith and practice, so as to leave it men's only business to ascertain the true and exact meaning of its statements, that they may implicitly submit to them. These topics they are fond of dwelling upon, and of setting forth with prominence, and even exaggeration. And the application they make of them is,—*first*, and more specifically, to disprove the inspiration of the books of Scripture; and, *secondly*, and more generally, to warrant and encourage the use of considerable liberty in dealing with their statements, and to cherish a feeling of uncertainty as to the accuracy of the results that may be deduced from an examination of them. They thus make it sufficiently manifest, just as the Papists do, that they are rather disposed to shrink from a trial of their doctrines, by a direct and impartial examination of the exact sense and import of the whole statements of Scripture, as they stand. They are fond, indeed, of declaiming upon the supremacy of the Scriptures, as the only rule of faith, in opposition to all human authorities, councils, creeds, confessions, etc., etc.; and though this general principle is unquestionably true and sound, yet it will commonly be found that there are, in Socinian and rationalistic declamations upon the subject, quite as plain indications of a feeling of soreness, that the creeds and confessions of human authority,—that is, of almost all who have ever professed to draw their faith from the Bible,—have been decidedly opposed to *their* theological views, as of reverence for the Scriptures. And there is ground for suspecting that the main reason of *their preference* for the Bible alone, is because they think they can show that the Scriptures are capable of being so dealt with as to countenance, or, at least, not to oppose, their system; while creeds and confessions commonly are not. Still Socinians



have generally admitted, at least theoretically and in words, down till their recent adoption in our own day, both in America and in Britain, of the entire anti-supernaturalism of German neologians, that the true sense of Scripture, when correctly and clearly ascertained, was to be practically and substantially the rule or standard of men's faith; and have, in consequence, usually undertaken to show, that their system of theology was countenanced by Scripture,—or, at least, was not opposed to it, but might be held by men who professed to receive the Bible as the rule of faith.

The leading peculiarity of their system of scriptural interpretation is just the principle, that nothing which is contrary to reason can be contained in a revelation from God; and that, therefore, if any statements of Scripture seem to impute to Jesus, or His apostles, the teaching of doctrines which are contrary to reason, they must, if possible, be explained in such a way as to avoid this difficulty, and be made to appear to teach nothing but what is accordant with reason. I will not enter again into the consideration of the general principle, or of the way and manner in which it ought to be applied, in so far as it has a foundation in truth; but will rather advert now to the way in which the Socinians actually deal with Scripture, in order to exclude from it anything irrational; though this is a topic which I fear can scarcely be made useful or interesting, without producing more in the way of examples than our space permits. It is very plain that, if it be admitted in general that our faith is to be determined by ascertaining the meaning of Scripture statements, then the first and most obvious step to be adopted is just to employ, with the utmost impartiality and diligence, all the means which are naturally fitted, as means, to effect this end. If it be true, as it is, that the special blessing of God, and the guidance and direction of His Spirit, are necessary to attain this end, let us abound in prayer that we may receive it. If the use of all the ordinary critical and philological means and appliances which are applicable to the interpretation of such a collection of documents as the Bible contains, is necessary to this end,—as it is,—then let all these be diligently and faithfully employed; and let the result be deliberately and impartially ascertained, in the exercise of sound reason and common sense. This should evidently be the way in which the work should be entered on; and then, in so far as the principle about alleged contrariety to reason is true and sound, and admits of being fairly applied, let

it be applied fully and frankly to the actual result of the critical and philological investigation, whatever may be the legitimate consequences of the application. But the Socinians commonly reverse this natural and legitimate process. They first lay down the principle, that certain doctrines,—such as the Trinity, the hypostatical union, the atonement, the eternity of punishment,—are irrational, or inconsistent with what natural reason teaches about God; and then, under the influence of this conviction, already existing, they proceed to examine Scripture for the purpose, not of simply ascertaining what it teaches, but of showing that *these* doctrines are *not* taught there, or, at least, that this cannot be proved.

Now, this condition of things, and the state of mind which it implies or produces, are manifestly unfavourable to a fair and impartial use of the means naturally fitted to enable men to ascertain correctly what Scripture teaches. Impartiality, in these circumstances, is not to be expected,—it would betray an ignorance of the known principles of human nature to look for it. Those who believe in these doctrines profess to have found them in Scripture, fairly interpreted, in the use of the ordinary appropriate means,—to base them upon no other foundation,—to know nothing about them but what is stated there,—and to be willing to renounce them, whenever it can be proved that they are not taught in the Bible; while the Socinians are placed, by this principle of theirs, in this position,—as some of the bolder and more straightforward among them have not scrupled to avow,—that they would not believe these doctrines, even if it could be proved to their satisfaction that they were plainly taught by the apostles. Still they usually profess to undertake to show that they are not taught in Scripture, or, at least, that no sufficient evidence of a critical and philological kind has been produced to prove that they are taught there. The violent perversion of all the legitimate and recognised principles and rules of philology and criticism, to which they have been obliged to have recourse in following out this bold undertaking, can be illustrated only by examples taken from the discussions of particular doctrines, and the interpretation of particular texts; but we may advert briefly to one or two of the more general features of their ordinary mode of procedure in this matter.

In regard to the text of the New Testament, they are accustomed to catch eagerly at, and to try to set forth with something

like plausibility, the most meagre and superficial critical evidence against the genuineness or integrity of particular passages,—as has been fully proved with respect to the attempts they have made to exclude, as spurious, the first two chapters both of Matthew and of Luke, because of their containing an account of the miraculous conception of Christ; and they sometimes even venture upon mere conjectural emendations of the text, which have not a shadow of critical authority to support them,—as, for instance, in their criticism upon Rom. ix. 5,—a practice condemned by all impartial critics.

In the interpretation of Scripture, one of the general presumptions which they are fond of using is this,—that the texts adduced in support of some doctrine which they reject, are brought only from one or two of the books of the New Testament,—that the alleged proofs of it are not by any means so clear, so frequent, or so widely diffused as might have been expected, if the doctrine in question had been intended to be taught,—or that no apparent proofs of it occur in passages where they might have been looked for, if the doctrine were true. In dealing with such considerations, which Socinians frequently insist upon, the defenders of orthodox doctrine usually maintain,—first, that most of the doctrines which Socinians reject are clearly and frequently taught in Scripture, and that statements affording satisfactory evidence of their truth, more formal or more incidental, are found to *pervade* the word of God; and, secondly, that even if it were not so, yet a presumption based upon such considerations is unwarranted and unreasonable: for that we have no right, because no sure ground to proceed upon in attempting, to prescribe or determine beforehand, in what particular way, with what measure of clearness or frequency, or in what places of Scripture, a doctrine should be stated or indicated; but are bound to receive it, provided only God, in His word, has given us *sufficient* grounds for believing it to have been revealed by Him. If the doctrine can be shown to be really taught in Scripture, this should be sufficient to command our assent, even though it should not be so fully and so frequently stated or indicated there as we might perhaps have expected beforehand, on the supposition of its being true; *especially* as it is manifest that the word of God, in its whole character and complexion, has been deliberately constructed on purpose to call forth and require men's diligence and attention in the study of its mean-

ing, and in the comparison of its statements; and to test also men's fairness, candour, and impartiality, as indicated by their being satisfied or not with reasonable and sufficient, though it may be *not* overwhelming, evidence of the doctrines there revealed.

Another general consideration, often insisted on by Socinians, in order to help out the very meagre evidence they can produce that particular passages in Scripture do not teach the orthodox doctrine, is this,—that all that they need to prove is, that the passage in question does not *necessarily* sanction the orthodox doctrine, but may *possibly* be understood in a different sense; and then they contend that they have done *this* at least. They often admit that, upon critical and philological grounds, a particular passage *may* be taken in the orthodox sense; but they contend that they have disproved the allegation that it *must* be taken in that sense, and that this is sufficient. Now, here again, orthodox divines maintain,—first, that in regard to many of the passages, the meaning of which is controverted between them and the Socinians, it can be shown, not only that they *may*, but that they *must*, bear the orthodox sense, and that no other sense is consistent with a fair application to them of the ordinary rules of philology, grammar, and criticism; and, secondly, that the Socinian demand that this must be proved in all cases, or indeed in any case, is unreasonable and overstrained. We may concede to the Socinians, that, in the controversy with them, the *onus probandi* lies properly upon us, and that we must produce sufficient and satisfactory evidence of the truth of our doctrines from Scripture, before we can reasonably expect them to be received. But we cannot admit that any such amount of antecedent improbability attaches to the doctrines we hold, as to impose upon us any obligation to do more than show that the Scripture, explained according to the ordinary legitimate principles and rules applicable to the matter, teaches, and was intended to teach, them,—that a man, examining fairly and impartially as to what the Scripture sets forth upon these points, would naturally, and as a matter of course, without straining or bias to either side, come to the conclusion that our doctrines are taught there,—and that these are the doctrines which the Scriptures were evidently intended, as they are fitted, to inculcate. We wish simply to know what the actual language of Scripture, when subjected to the ordinary legitimate processes of criticism, really gives out,—what it seems to



have been really intended to convey. The resolution with which the Socinians set out, of labouring to establish a bare possibility that the words *may* not have the sense we ascribe to them,—that they may *by possibility* have a different meaning,—has no reasonable foundation to rest upon; and it produces a state of mind manifestly opposed to anything like a candid and impartial investigation of what it is that the Scripture truly means. Under the influence of this resolution, men will generally find no difficulty in getting up some plausible grounds for asserting, that almost any conceivable statement does not *necessarily* mean what appears plainly to be its real and intended meaning, and that it might by possibility mean something else; while they lose sight of, and wholly miss, the only question that legitimately ought to have been entertained,—namely, What is the true and real meaning which the words bear, and were intended to bear?

It is in entire accordance with these unreasonable and overstrained principles of interpretation, that Mr Belsham,—who held the most prominent place among the Socinians of this country at the conclusion of last century, and the beginning of this,—lays it down as one of his general exegetical rules,\* that “impartial and sincere inquirers after truth must be particularly upon their guard against what is called the natural signification of words and phrases,”—a statement manifestly implying a consciousness that Socinianism requires to put a forced and unnatural construction upon scriptural expressions, such as would not readily commend itself to the common sense of upright men, unless they were prepared for it by something like a plausible generality, in the form of an antecedent rule. It is, however, just the *natural* signification of words and phrases that we are bound, by the obligations of candour and integrity, to seek: meaning thereby, that we are called upon to investigate, in the fair use of all legitimate means and appliances suitable to the case, what the words were really designed to express; and having ascertained this, either to receive it as resting upon the authority of God, or, should there seem to be adequate grounds for it, on account of the real and unquestionable contrariety to reason of the doctrine thus brought out, to

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\* Belsham's "Calm Inquiry," Introduct., pp. 4, 5; quoted and animadverted on in Apb. Magee's Supplement | to the Remarks on the Unitarian Version of the New Testament—Works, vol. ii., p. 108.

reject the document containing it as resting upon no authority whatever.\*

*Sec. III.—Socinian System of Theology.*

Having explained the origin and causes of Socinianism, and the principles and leading features of the plan on which its supporters proceed in the interpretation of Scripture, we have now to give some exposition of the system of theology which, by the application of these principles, the Socinians have deduced from Scripture; or, to speak more correctly, which they consider themselves warranted in holding, *notwithstanding* their professed belief in the divine origin of the Christian revelation. We have been accustomed to speak of Socinianism as just implying a rejection or denial of all the peculiar and fundamental doctrines of the Christian system, as revealed in the sacred Scriptures; and this is, so far as it goes, a correct, though but a negative and defective, description of it. Socinianism, however, is not a mere negation; it implies a system of *positive* opinions upon all the important topics of theology, in regard to the divine character and moral government,—the moral character, capacities, and obligations of mankind,—the person and the work of Jesus Christ,—the whole method of salvation,—and the ultimate destinies of men. It is common, indeed, to speak of the *meagre* or *scanty* creed of the Socinians; and in one sense the description is unquestionably correct, for it includes scarcely any of those doctrines which have been usually received by the great body of professing Christians as taught in Scripture. And when thus compared with the system of doctrine that has commonly been held in the Christian church, it may be regarded as being, to a large extent, of a negative character, and very scanty in its dimensions. At the same time, it should be observed, that while, in one point of view, the Socinian creed may be regarded as very meagre and scanty, inasmuch as it contains scarcely any of those doctrines which Christians in general have found in the word of God, yet it really contains a system of opinions, and *positive* opinions, upon all those topics to which these doctrines relate. The ideas most commonly associated with the name of Socinianism are just the denial or

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\* Dr J. P. Smith's Scripture Testimony, Book I., especially last chapter, in reply to Belsham.

rejection of the doctrines of the Trinity, of the proper divinity of Christ and of His vicarious atonement, and of the personality of the Spirit. And without adverting at present to other features of the Socinian system, it ought to be observed, that while they deny or reject the doctrines that have been commonly held by the Christian church upon these points, they have *their own* doctrines regarding them, which are not *mere negations*, but may be, and are, embodied in positive propositions. They not only deny the doctrine of the Trinity, but they positively assert that the Godhead is one in person as well as in essence. They not only deny the proper divinity of Jesus Christ, but they positively assert that He was a mere man,—that is, a man and nothing else, or more than a man. They not only deny the vicarious atonement of Christ, which most other professing Christians reckon the foundation of their hopes for eternity, but they assert that men, by their own repentance and good works, procure the forgiveness of their sins and the enjoyment of God's favour; and thus, while denying that, in any proper sense, Christ is their Saviour, they teach that men save themselves,—that is, in so far as they need salvation. While they deny that the Spirit is a person who possesses the divine nature, they teach that the Holy Ghost in Scripture describes or expresses merely a quality or attribute of God. They have their own *positive* doctrines upon all these points,—doctrines which their creed embraces, and which their writings inculcate. On all these topics their creed is really as wide and comprehensive as that of any other section of professing Christians, though it differs greatly from what has been generally received in the Christian church, and presents all these important subjects in a very different aspect.

Socinians, as Dr Owen observes,\* are fond of taking the place, and sustaining the part, of respondents merely in controversy; and it is no doubt true, that if they could succeed in showing that our doctrines receive no countenance from Scripture, we would not only be called upon to renounce these doctrines, but, in doing so, would, at the same time, as a matter of course, embrace views substantially Socinian. Still, it is right and useful that, during the controversy, we should have distinct and definite conceptions of what are the alternatives,—of what are their doctrines upon all points as well as our own, and of what are the posi-

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\* Dr Owen, Pref. to *Vindiciæ Evangelicæ*.

tive opinions which we must be prepared to embrace and maintain, if we think we see ground to abandon the orthodox system of doctrine and to adopt the Socinian. We are not to imagine, then, that what is commonly called the scanty creed of Socinianism is a mere negation; and we are to regard it as virtually embodying positive doctrines upon those points on which we ourselves hold opinions,—though opinions very different from theirs.

There is another observation of a general kind which I think it important that we should remember,—namely, that Socinianism really includes a *scheme of doctrines* upon all the leading subjects of theology,—upon all the main topics usually discussed in theological systems. The common impression is, that Socinianism merely describes certain views upon the subjects of the Trinity and the atonement; and these topics, indeed, have always and necessarily had much prominence in the controversies that have been carried on with the Socinians or Unitarians. But right or wrong views upon these points must, from the nature of the case, materially affect men's opinions upon all other important topics in theology; and, in point of fact, Socinianism, even in the writings of its founders, was a fully developed system of doctrine upon everything material that enters, or has been supposed to enter, into the scheme of revelation. Socinianism has its own Theology in the strictest and most limited sense of that word,—that is, its peculiar views about God, His attributes and moral government, as well as its negation of a personal distinction in the Godhead. It has its own Anthropology,—that is, its own peculiar views in regard to the moral character and capacities of mankind as we find them in this world, though here it has just adopted the old Pelagian system. It has its own Christology, or its peculiar views as to who or what Christ was,—though here it has followed very much what were called the Samosatanean and Photinian heresies of early times; names, indeed, by which *it* was often designated by the writers of the seventeenth century. It has its own Soteriology,—that is, its peculiar views of the plan of salvation,—of the way and manner in which men individually are saved, or actually attain to final happiness,—as comprehending the topics usually discussed under the heads of the atonement or satisfaction of Christ, justification, regeneration, and the work of the Holy Spirit; on the latter topic, indeed, adopting substantially the views of the Pelagians; but with respect to the first of them,—namely, the



atonement,—they have discoveries and demerits which may be said to be almost wholly their own. They have their own Eschatology, as it is called—that is, their peculiar views in regard to those topics which are usually discussed in theological systems under the general head “De novissimis,” or the last things,—and especially the resurrection and the final punishment, or the fate and destiny, of the wicked. And besides all this, they have views in a great measure peculiar to themselves, and in full harmony with the general character and tendency of their theological system, on the subjects of the Church, and especially of the Sacraments. We have a sounder view of what Socinianism is, and can form a juster apprehension of the estimate that ought to be made of it, when we regard it as a complete and well-digested system, extending over the whole field of theology, and professing to present a full account of all the leading topics which it most concerns men to know, of everything bearing upon their relation to God and their eternal welfare; a system, indeed, taking up and embodying some of the worst and most pernicious of the heresies which had previously distracted and injured the church, but likewise adding some important heretical contributions of its own, and presenting them, in combination, in a form much more fully developed, much better digested and compacted, and much more skilfully defended, than ever they had been before. It may tend to bring out this somewhat more fully, if we give a brief statement of what the views *are* which have been commonly held by Socinians on these different subjects, mainly for the purpose of illustrating the unity and harmony of their theological system, and showing that the controversy with the Socinians is not a mere dispute about some particular doctrines, however important these may be, but really involves a contest for *everything* that is peculiar and important in the Christian system.

It is true of all systems of theology,—taking that word in its wide and common sense, as implying a knowledge of all matters bearing upon our relation to God and our eternal destinies,—that they are materially influenced, in their general character and complexion, by the views which they embody about the divine attributes, character, and government,—that is, about theology in the restricted meaning of the word, or the doctrine concerning God. Hence we find that, in many systems of theology, there are introduced, under the head “De Deo,” and in the exposition of the

divine attributes, discussions more or less complete, of many topics that are afterwards taken up and illustrated more fully under their own proper heads,—such as providence, predestination, and grace. Socinians have sought, like other theologians, to lay the foundation of their system of doctrine in certain peculiar views in regard to the divine attributes. Orthodox divines have commonly charged them with denying, or explaining away, certain attributes which reason and Scripture seem to unite in ascribing to God, with the view of diminishing the perfection of the divine glory and character, and thereby removing arguments in favour of orthodox doctrines, and bringing in presumptions in favour of their own. I cannot enter into details, but may briefly advert to two of the principal topics that are usually brought into the discussion of this subject.

Socinianism,—and, indeed, this may be said of most other systems of false religion,—represents God as a Being whose moral character is composed exclusively of goodness and mercy; of a mere desire to promote the happiness of His creatures, and a perfect readiness at once to forgive and to bless all who have transgressed against Him. They thus virtually exclude from the divine character that immaculate holiness which is represented in Scripture as leading God to hate sin, and that inflexible justice which we are taught to regard as constraining Him to inflict on sinners the punishment which He has threatened, and which they have merited. The form in which this topic is commonly discussed in more immediate connection with Socinianism, is this,—whether vindicative, or punitive justice,—that is, justice which constrains or obliges to give to sinners the punishment they have deserved,—be an actual quality of God—an attribute of the divine nature? The discussion of this question occupies a prominent place in many works on the atonement; the Socinians denying that there is any such quality in God,—anything in His nature or character which throws any obstacle or impediment in the way of His at once pardoning transgressors, without any satisfaction to His justice; while orthodox divines have generally contended for the existence of such a quality or attribute in God, and for its rendering *necessary* a vicarious atonement, or satisfaction, in order that sinners might be forgiven.

The other topic under this general head to which we propose to advert, is that of the divine omniscience. Orthodox divines

have always contended that scriptural views of this attribute, and of its application, afforded powerful arguments in favour of that entire dependence of men upon God's will and purposes which may be said to be a characteristic of the Calvinistic scheme of theology; and, accordingly, the discussion of it, and of the inferences that may be legitimately deduced from it, has entered largely into the Arminian controversy. The Socinians agree in the main with the Arminians upon this subject,—that is, so far as concerns a denial of Calvinistic doctrines; but being somewhat bolder and more unscrupulous than the Arminians, they have adopted a somewhat different mode of arriving at the same conclusion. The Arminians generally admit that God certainly foresees all future contingent events, such as the future actions of men exercising, without constraint, their natural powers of volition; but *how* this can be reconciled with their doctrine, that He has not foreordained these events, they do not pretend to explain. They leave this unexplained, as the great difficulty admittedly attaching to their system, or rather, as the *precise* place where they are disposed to put the difficulty which attaches to all systems that embrace at once the foreknowledge of God and the responsibility of man. The Socinians, however, being less easily staggered by the conclusive Scripture evidence of God's foreseeing the future free actions of men, especially that arising from the undoubted fact that He has so often predicted what they would be, boldly deny that He foresees these actions, or knows anything about them, until they come to pass; except, it may be, in some special cases, in which, contrary to His usual practice, he has foreordained the event, and foresees it *because* He has foreordained it. That they may seem, indeed, not to derogate from God's omniscience, they admit indeed that God knows all things that are knowable; but then they contend that future contingent events, such as the future actions of responsible agents, are *not* knowable,—do not come within the scope of what may be known, even by an infinite Being; and, upon this ground, they allege that it is no derogation from the omniscience of God, that He does not, and cannot, know what is not knowable. They think that in this way, by denying the divine foreknowledge of future contingencies, they most effectually overturn the Calvinistic doctrine of God's foreordaining whatsoever comes to pass; while they, at the same time, concede to the Calvinists, in opposition to the Arminian view, that God's certain

foreknowledge of the actions of men lays an immovable foundation for the position that He has foreordained them.

It may be worth while to mention upon this point—for the fact is both very curious and very important—that, in what is probably the earliest summary ever given of the whole Socinian system of doctrine, after it was fully developed, in a little work, understood to have been written with the view of explaining and defending it, by Ostorodus and Voidovius, when, in 1598, they were sent from Poland on a mission into the Low Countries, in order to propagate their doctrines there, it is expressly assigned as a reason why they denied God's foreknowledge of the future actions of men, that there was no other way of escaping from the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination.\* We shall afterwards have an opportunity of showing that there is more truth and consistency in the Socinian, than in the Arminian, view upon this particular point, while they agree in the general conclusion, in opposition to Calvinists; but, in the meantime, the two instances we have given will show how wide and extensive are the Socinian heresies, and how thoroughly accordant it is with the general character and tendency of their system to indulge in presumptuous speculations about the incomprehensible God—to obscure the glory of His adorable perfections—and to bring Him nearer to the level of the creatures whom He has formed. As the Trinity must afterwards be more fully discussed, I say nothing more about it at present, except this—that here, too, Socinians manifest the same qualities and tendencies, by presuming to claim such a thorough knowledge of what the divine unity is, and of what it consists in, as to be warranted in maintaining, as a first and certain principle, that it is necessarily inconsistent with a personal distinction, or a plurality of persons, and generally by insisting on applying to the divine nature notions and conceptions derived wholly from what takes place and is exhibited among men.

I have said that the Socinian doctrine about the moral character and capacities of mankind is just a revival of the old Pelagian

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\* *Vide* Mosheim, Cent. xvi., chap. iv., sec. xiv. Cloppenburgii Compendiolum Socinianismi confutatum, c. vi., quoted also by Witsius, De Econ. Fœd., Lib. iii., c. iv., sec. xii. As to the authorship of this Compend, see

Sandii Bibliotheca Antitrinitariorum, p. 91; Buddæi Isagoge, tom. i., p. 380, ed. 1730; Wallace's Antitrinitarian Biography, vol. ii., pp. 400 and 405.



heresy. Of course it amounts in substance to a denial of the fall and of all original depravity, and to an assertion that men are now, as to all moral qualities, tendencies, and capacities, in the same condition as when the race was created. The image of God in which man was formed consisted, according to them, merely in dominion over the creatures, and not in any moral perfection or excellence of nature. Adam had no original righteousness, or positive holy tendency of moral nature, any more than we have; and, of course, did not lose any quality of that sort by the sin into which he fell. He committed an act of sin, and thereby incurred the divine displeasure; but he retained the same moral nature and tendencies with which he was created, and transmitted these unimpaired to his posterity. He was created naturally mortal, and would have died whether he had sinned or not. Men are now, in moral nature and tendencies, just as pure and holy as Adam was when he came from the hand of his Creator,—without any proper holiness of nature, indeed, or positive tendency and inclination, in virtue of their moral constitution, to love and obey God, for that Adam never had; but also without any proneness or tendency to sin, although we are placed in somewhat more unfavourable circumstances than he was, in consequence of the many *examples* of sin which we see and hear of,—a position which somewhat *increases the chances* of our actually falling into sin. Still men may avoid sin altogether, and some do so, and obtain eternal blessedness as the reward of their perfect obedience. And in regard to those who do commit actual sin, and are guilty of transgression, this at least is plain in general,—that since men are weak or frail, though not sinful or depraved, creatures, and since God is nothing but a kind and merciful Father, and has no punitive justice as a constituent element of His character, there can be no difficulty in their obtaining His forgiveness, and being restored to His favour, and thus escaping all the consequences of their transgressions.

As it is true that men's whole theological system is usually connected intimately with the views or impressions they may have been led to form of God's character and government, so it is equally true that their whole views upon theological subjects are greatly affected by the opinions they may have been led to form of the fall of Adam, and its bearing upon his posterity. Sound and scriptural views upon this important subject are indispensably necessary to anything like a correct system of theo-

logy; and errors in regard to it spread darkness and confusion over the whole field of theological investigation. Nothing has been more fully brought out by the history of theological discussions than the truth of this position; and the case of Socinianism most strikingly confirms it. If man has not fallen and ruined himself, he has no need of a Saviour, or of any extraordinary interposition of God, in order to his salvation. Sin can be no very heinous matter when committed by such frail creatures as men are; and, when viewed in connection with the character of so gracious and benevolent a being as God is, cannot be supposed to occasion any very great difficulty, or to require any very extraordinary provision, in order to its being forgiven and removed. And, accordingly, the whole Socinian system is based upon these general notions and impressions. He whom most other persons that take the name of Christians regard as their Saviour, and whom they believe to be represented in Scripture as God over all,—a possessor of the divine nature,—and to be held up there as the sole author of their salvation, an object of unbounded confidence and reverence, affection and worship,—and whom *all* admit to have been sent into the world that He might do everything that was needful, *whatever that might be*, to secure the salvation of men,—is regarded by the Socinians as a mere man, who had no higher nature than the human, who had no existence till He was born in Bethlehem, who did nothing, *and who had nothing to do*, for the fulfilment of His mission, but to communicate fuller and more certain information about the divine character and government, the path of duty, and future blessedness, and to set before them an example of obedience to God's law and will. What they say of Christ is true, so far as it goes. He was a man, and He did what they ascribe to Him. But it is not the whole truth, and He did much more for our salvation. Were the Socinian view of man's natural condition correct, a mere man, who came to communicate information and to exhibit an example, might have sufficed for all that was needed. No satisfaction required to be made to divine justice, no righteousness to be wrought out, no change needed to be effected upon men's moral nature. And, of course, there was no need of a divine Saviour to expiate and intercede, or of a divine Spirit to renew and sanctify. All this is superfluous, and, therefore, it is wholly discarded. The condition of man did not require

it, and indeed did not admit of it; and therefore God did not provide it. Men needed only to be assured of God's readiness to pardon all their sins, without satisfaction to His justice, and to get clearer and more certain information than they could very readily procure themselves as to the course they ought to pursue, in order to share more abundantly in God's favour. This was not indeed altogether indispensable, but highly desirable. And God might have communicated it to men in many ways; but He has chosen to convey it by One who, though described in Scripture as the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person, was yet nothing more than a mere partaker of flesh and blood like ourselves. The sins of men are forgiven merely *because* God's nature leads Him to forgive, and does not lead Him to punish, sin. They need no change upon their moral constitution; accordingly, no provision has been made for changing it. They need merely to be instructed how they can best improve what they have, and most successfully exercise their own natural powers. And this, accordingly, was the *sole* end of Christ's mission, and of the revelation which He gave.

Christ is undoubtedly spoken of in Scripture as a Prophet, a Priest, and a King; and it has been generally supposed that these different offices, ascribed to Him, express, or indicate, the three chief departments of the work which He was to execute, in order to promote the spiritual welfare of men. The old Socinians reduced them to two,—virtually rejecting the priestly office altogether, or conjoining and confounding it with the kingly one; while modern Socinians have still further simplified the work, by abolishing the kingly office of Christ, and resolving all into the prophetic. In the Racovian Catechism,—which fills, in the complete edition of 1680, very nearly two hundred pages,—four pages are devoted to the kingly office, six are assigned to the priestly or sacerdotal office; and these six are chiefly devoted to the object of proving that Christ was *not* a priest, and did not execute priestly functions *upon earth*, although it is admitted that He did so, in some vague and indefinite sense, after He ascended to heaven. The exposition of the prophetic office occupies nearly one hundred pages, or one-half of the whole work. And as this was really and substantially, upon Socinian principles, the only office Christ executed, they endeavour to make the most of it. A considerable space is occupied, in the Racovian Catechism,—and on

this account, also, in many of the older works written against the Socinians,—in the discussion of this question,—Whether Christ, in the execution of His prophetic office, revealed to, and imposed upon, men a new code of moral duty,—imposed upon them new and stricter moral precepts which were not previously binding, in virtue of anything which they would learn from the exercise of their own faculties, or from any revelation which God might have formerly given. The Socinians, of course, maintained the affirmative upon this question, in opposition to orthodox divines. And the reason is manifest,—namely, that since Christ had nothing else to do, in the fulfilment of His mission upon earth, but just to reveal, or make known, matters of doctrine and duty, the more of *this* work He did, the more plausible will seem the Socinian account of His mission, viewed in connection with the exalted representations that seem to be given us of it in Scripture, even though that account omits everything about satisfying divine justice, and thereby reconciling us to God. But then it did not suit the tendency and genius of the Socinian system to ascribe to Him much work in the way of revealing to men new truths or doctrines. According to their views of things, very little doctrine is needed, except what men can easily and readily acquire; for though, as I have explained, they have their own positive opinions upon most theological points, there are very few doctrines which they reckon fundamental. Certain notions about the divine character, and some certainty about a future state of happiness for good men, constitute all, in the way of doctrine, that is necessary or very important. And hence, the old Socinians laid the main stress, in expounding the prophetic office of Christ, and unfolding the object of His mission, upon His making important additions to the precepts of the moral law, and imposing upon men moral obligations which were not previously binding. They were accustomed to draw out, in detail, the instances of the additions He made to the moral law, and the reasons on account of which they held that the particular cases alleged *were* instances of the general position they maintained upon this point; and the discussion of all this occupies one-fourth part of the Racovian Catechism. The general position, of course, can be proved only, if at all, by an induction of particulars; and these they ranked under two heads: first, the additions Christ made to precepts which had formerly been given in the Old Testament,



but which, in many instances, they allege, He rendered more strict and extensive; and, secondly, in the precepts He introduced which were wholly new. Under the first head they go over the ten commandments, and endeavour to show that, in regard to every one of them, the New Testament imposes some additional obligation which was not binding, and might have been disregarded or violated without sin, under the law as given by Moses from Mount Sinai,—making use for this purpose chiefly of some of the statements contained in our Saviour's sermon upon the Mount. And so, in like manner, under the second head, they select a number of New Testament precepts, and endeavour to show that they impose duties which were not binding under the Old Testament economy.

These views are utterly rejected by orthodox divines, who, in the discussion of this subject, have fully shown that Socinians need to employ as much straining and perverting of Scripture, in order to make out that Christ added new precepts to the moral law, as is required to show that He was *not* made under the law, being made a curse for us, that He might redeem those who were under the law. In this way, however, Socinians make out a full and complete rule of moral duty, communicated to men by Christ; and as men have, in the exercise of their own natural capacities, full power to obey it, in all the length and breadth of its requirements, without needing renovation and sanctification from the Spirit, there is no difficulty in their securing their own eternal happiness.

The old Socinians inculcated,—and, so far as outward conduct is concerned, usually acted upon,—a high standard of morality, putting commonly the strictest interpretation upon the moral precepts of the New Testament. Their general system, upon the grounds already explained, naturally led to the adoption of these views, and zeal for the system naturally induced them to attempt to follow them out in practice; just as other false views in religion have often led men to submit to the severest hardships and mortifications. But experience abundantly proves, that, constituted as human nature is, no attempt to carry out a high standard of morality will ever succeed, *for any great length of time, or among any considerable number of men*, which is not based upon the scriptural system of doctrine; upon right views of the moral nature of man, and of the provision made, under the Christian scheme, by the work of Christ and the operation of the Spirit, for reno-

vating and sanctifying it. And, accordingly, modern Socinians have wholly abandoned the strict and austere morality of the founders of their system. They commonly exhibit the character and the conduct of mere irreligious and ungodly men of the world; and while they still profess to open up heaven to men as the reward of their own good deeds, wrought in their own unaided strength,—that is, without any aid except the ordinary assistance of God in providence, as He upholds and sustains all things,—they seem to have discovered, by some means with which the old Socinians were unacquainted, that a very scanty supply of good works, and especially very little of anything done from a regard to God, to the promotion of His glory and honour, is amply sufficient to accomplish the important end, and to secure men's everlasting happiness.\*

Under this same general head of the prophetic office of Christ, the Racovian Catechism has a chapter† on the subject of His death,—the place which that great event occupies in the Christian scheme, and the purposes it was intended to serve. As it was a fundamental principle of the old Socinians, that Christ did not execute the office of a priest *upon earth*,—though they admitted that He did so, in some vague and indefinite sense, after His ascension to heaven,—His suffering of death, of course, did not belong to the execution of the priestly, but of the prophetic, office; in other words, its sole object and design were confined within the general range of serving to declare and confirm to men the will of God,—that is, the revelation of an immortality beyond death, of which no certainty had been given to men before Christ's death, not even to the most highly favoured servants of God under the ancient economy. Accordingly, the exposition of the death of Christ in the Racovian Catechism is mainly devoted to the object,—first, of proving that it was not, as Christians have commonly believed, a satisfaction to divine justice for men's sins, though it is admitted that Christ might, in some vague and indefinite sense, be described as a sort of piacular victim,—and, secondly, of showing how it served to declare and confirm the revelation which God thought proper then to make to men of immortality

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\* See Fuller's "Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined and Compared as to their Moral Tendency." † Racov. Cat., c. viii. Ed. 1680.

and a future life of blessedness for the righteous,—the special importance which seems to be assigned to it in Scripture, in its bearing upon the eternal welfare of men, being ascribed to, and explained by, not any peculiar or specific bearing it had upon the forgiveness of sin, reconciliation with God, and the enjoyment of His favour; but simply this,—that it was a necessary preliminary to Christ's resurrection, by which chiefly He made known and established the doctrine of immortality, and thereby presented to men such views and motives as might induce them, in the exercise of their own natural powers, to lead such a life as that they would secure *for themselves* the forgiveness of any sins which they might have committed, and the enjoyment of eternal life. This, and this alone, according to the Socinians, is the place which the death of Christ holds in the Christian scheme; and this indirect and circuitous process is the only way in which it bears upon or affects men's relation to God and their everlasting destinies. Some modern Socinians have seriously proposed, that the established phraseology of Christ being the Saviour of sinners should be wholly abandoned, as being fitted only to delude and deceive men, by conveying to them the idea that Christ had done, for the promotion of their spiritual welfare, far more than He ever did, and far more than their natural condition required or admitted of.

With respect to eschatology, or the head "*De novissimis*,"—the last things,—the general spirit and tendency of Socinians are also manifested in some important deviations from the doctrines which have been generally received among Christians as being plainly taught in Scripture. They have always denied the scriptural doctrine of the resurrection,—that is, of the resurrection of the same body,—as a thing absurd and impossible; thus faithfully following their true progenitors, the infidel Sadducees, and erring, like them, because, as our Saviour said, they know not the Scriptures nor the power of God. They admitted, indeed, that there will be what they call a resurrection, at least of the righteous; for many of the old Socinians maintained that the wicked who had died before the end of the world would not be raised again, but would continue for ever in a state of insensibility or annihilation,—though this doctrine is repudiated in the later editions of the Racovian Catechism;\*—but then it was not a resurrection of the *same* body, but

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\* Racov. Cat., sec. viii., pp. 179, 180.

the formation and the union to the soul—which they generally held to have been, during the intervening period, in a state of insensibility—of a different body. Eternal punishment, of course, was inconsistent with all their notions of the divine character and government, of the nature and demerit of sin, and the design and end of punishment. But they have been a good deal divided among themselves between the two theories of the entire destruction or final annihilation of the wicked, and the ultimate restoration of all men to the enjoyment of eternal blessedness after a period, more or less protracted, of penal suffering. The older Socinians generally adopted the doctrine of the annihilation of the wicked, though they sought somewhat to conceal this, by confining themselves very much to the use of the scriptural language, of their being subjected to eternal death;\* while modern Socinians, with very few exceptions, advocate the doctrine of universal restoration, or the final and eternal happiness of all intelligent creatures, and hold this to be necessarily involved in, and certainly deducible from, right views of the Divine perfections.

I need not dwell upon the views of Socinians, in regard to the nature of the Christian church, and the object and efficacy of the sacraments. As the sole object of the appearance of Christ upon earth, and of the whole Christian scheme, was merely to communicate to men instruction or information, and not to procure for them, and bestow upon them, the forgiveness of their sins,—the enjoyment of God's favour,—and the renovation of their natures,—of course the objects of the church and the sacraments, viewed as means or instruments, must be wholly restricted within the same narrow range. The church is not, in any proper sense, a divine institution; and does not consist of men called by the almighty grace of God out of the world, and formed by Him into a peculiar society, the constitution of which He has established, and which He specially governs and superintends. It is a mere voluntary association of men, who are naturally drawn together, because they happen to have adopted somewhat similar views upon religious subjects, and

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\* Wakefield held the doctrine of annihilation; while Priestley, after hesitating long between the doctrines of annihilation and universal restitution, finally adopted the latter.

Estlin's Discourses on the Universal Restitution, pp. 69-72.

Dr Lant Carpenter's Examination of Magee's Charges against Unitarians and Unitarianism, 1820, c. iii., pp. 40-44.



who seek to promote one another's welfare, in the way that may seem best to their own wisdom; while the sacraments are intended to *teach* men, and to impress divine truth upon their minds, and are *in no way whatever* connected with any act on God's part in the communication of spiritual blessings.

I have thus given a brief sketch of the Socinian system of theology, and I would now make one or two reflections obviously suggested by the survey of it. It is manifestly, as I formerly explained, a full scheme or system, extending over all the leading topics of theology. It is plainly characterized throughout by perfect unity and harmony, by the consistency of all its parts with each other, and by the pervading influence of certain leading features and objects. It might, we think, be shown that the Socinian system of theology is the only consistent rival to the Calvinistic one; and that when men abandon the great features of the scriptural system of Calvinism, they have no firm and steady resting-place on which they can take their stand, until they sink down to Socinianism. It is very evident that the Socinian system presents a striking contrast, not only to the views of doctrine which have been generally professed and maintained by Christian churches, but to what seems *prima facie* to be plainly and palpably taught in Scripture. It must present itself to the minds of men, who have become at all familiar with scriptural statements, in the light of an opposition scheme, fitted and intended to counteract and neutralize all that Christianity seems calculated to teach and to effect; and a thorough investigation of the grounds of the attempts which Socinians have made to show that their system of theology is consistent with Scripture and sanctioned by it, will only confirm this impression. Socinianism has been openly and avowedly maintained only by an inconsiderable number of professing Christians,—many of those who held the leading principles of the Socinian scheme of theology having thought it more honest and straightforward to deny at once the truth of Christianity, than to pretend to receive it, and then to spend their time, and waste their ingenuity, in labouring to show that the scheme of scriptural doctrine was, in almost every important particular, the very reverse of what the first promulgators of the system plainly understood and intended it to be. The churches of Christ, in general, have held themselves fully warranted in denying to Socinians the name and character of Christians; and the ground of this denial

is quite sufficient and satisfactory,—namely this, that Socinianism is a deliberate and determined rejection of *the whole substance of the message* which Christ and His apostles conveyed from God to men. The Racovian Catechism\* asserts that those who refuse to invoke and worship Christ are not to be reckoned Christians, though they assume His name, and profess to adhere to His doctrine,—thus excluding from the pale of Christianity the great body of those who, in modern times, have adopted the leading features of that scheme of theology which the old Socinians advanced. And if the denial of worship to Christ was, as the old Socinians believed, a sufficient ground for denying to men the name of Christians, it must surely be thoroughly warrantable to deny the name to men who refuse not only to pay religious worship to Christ, but to receive and submit to anything that is really important and vital in the revelations which He communicated to men.

Mr Belsham, the leader of the English Socinians in the last generation, has distinctly stated that the only thing peculiar in Christianity, or the Christian revelation,—the only point in which it differs from, or goes beyond, the natural religion that may be discovered and established by men in the exercise of their own unaided powers,—is simply *the fact of the resurrection of a dead man*, and the confirmation thereby given to the doctrine of a future immortality. Now, perhaps we are not entitled to deny that Socinians are really persuaded of the sufficiency of the evidence by which it is proved that Christ rose from the dead, and that they hold the doctrine of a future immortality more firmly and steadily than it was held by Plato or Cicero. But if, professing to receive Christ as a divine messenger on the ground of the proof of His resurrection, they yet reject the whole substance of the message which He professed to bring from God to men, we cannot concede to them the character or designation of disciples or followers of Christ. A Christian must, at least, mean one who believes Christ to have been a divine messenger, *and who receives as true the substance of the message which He bore*; and in whatever way we explain the entire dissolution and breaking up, in the case of the Socinians, of the right and legitimate connection that ought to subsist between the admission of the authority of the messenger and the reception of His message, we cannot recognise as Chris-

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\* Sec. vi., p. 92.

tians men who refuse to believe almost everything which Christ and His apostles taught, and whose whole system of theology,—whose leading views of the character and government of God, the condition and capacities of men, and the way in which they may attain to final happiness,—are just the same as they would be if they openly denied Christ's divine commission,—not only uninfluenced by the revelation He communicated, but directly opposed to it.

But while Socinianism has not been, to any very considerable extent, openly avowed and formally defended in the Christian church, and while those who have avowed and defended it have commonly and justly been regarded as not entitled to the designation of Christians, yet it is important to observe, that there has always been a great deal of latent and undeveloped Socinianism among men who have professed to believe in the truth of Christianity; and the cause of this, of course, is, that Socinianism, in its germs or radical principles, is the system of theology that is natural to fallen and depraved man,—that which springs up spontaneously in the human heart, unenlightened by the Spirit of God, and unrenewed by divine grace. It has been often said that men are born Papists; and this is true in the sense that there are natural and spontaneous tendencies in men, out of which the Popish system readily grows, and which make it an easy matter to lead unrenovéd men to embrace it. Still it does require *some* care and culture to make a natural man, who has not been subjected to the system from his infancy, a Papist, though the process in ordinary cases is not a very difficult or a very elaborate one. But it requires *no* care or culture whatever to make natural men Socinians,—nothing but the mere throwing off of the traditional or consuetudinary respect in which, in Christian countries, they may have been bred for the manifest sense of Scripture. The more intelligent and enlightened Pagans, and the followers of Mahomet, agree in substance with the whole leading features of the Socinian theology; and if we could bring out and estimate the notions that float in the minds of the great body of irreligious and ungodly men among professing Christians, who have never thought seriously upon religious subjects, we would find that they just constitute the germs, or radical principles, of Socinianism. Take any one of the mass of irreligious men, who abound in professedly Christian society around us,—a man, it may be, who has never entertained any doubts of the truth of Christianity, who has never

thought seriously upon any religious subject, or attempted to form a clear and definite conception upon any theological topic,—try to probe a little the vague notions which lie undeveloped in his mind about the divine character, the natural state and condition of man, and the way of attaining to ultimate happiness; and if you can get materials for forming any sort of estimate or conjecture as to the notions or impressions upon these points that may have spontaneously, and without effort, grown up in his mind, you will certainly find, that, without being aware of it, he is practically and substantially a Socinian. The notions and impressions of such men upon all religious subjects are, of course, very vague and confused; but it will commonly be found that, in their inmost thoughts,—in the ordinary and spontaneous current of their impressions, in so far as they have any, in regard to religion,—Christ, as the Saviour of sinners, and the atonement as the basis or ground of salvation, are virtually shut out, or reduced to mere names or unmeaning formulæ; that the Christian scheme, in so far as it is taken into account, is viewed merely as a revelation or communication of some information about God and duty; and that their hopes of ultimate happiness, in so far as they can be said to have any, are practically based upon what they themselves have done, or can do, viewed in connection with defective and erroneous conceptions of the character and moral government of God, while a definite conviction of the certainty of future punishment has no place in their minds. Now, this is, in substance, just the Socinian system of theology; and if these men were drawn out, so as to be led to attempt to explain and defend the vague and confused notions upon these subjects which had hitherto lurked undeveloped in their minds, it would plainly appear,—*provided* they had intelligence enough to trace somewhat the logical relation of ideas, and courage enough to disregard the vague deference for the obvious sense of Scripture, and for the general belief of Christian churches, to which they had become habituated,—that they were obliged to have recourse to Socinian arguments as the only means of defence; unless, indeed, they should reach the higher intelligence, or the greater courage, of openly rejecting Christianity altogether, as teaching a system of doctrine irrational and absurd.

This is, I am persuaded, a correct account of the general state of feeling and impression, in regard to religious subjects, existing in the minds of the great body of the ignorant, unreflecting, and



irreligious men around us, in professedly Christian society; and if so, it goes far to prove that, while there is not a great deal of open and avowed Socinianism maintained and defended among us, yet that it exists to a large extent in a latent and undeveloped form, and that it is the natural and spontaneous product of the depraved, unrenewed heart of man, exhibiting its natural tendencies in the formation of notions and impressions about God and divine things, and the way of attaining to ultimate happiness, which are not only unsanctioned by the revelation which God Himself has given us in regard to these matters, but are flatly opposed to it.

In these circumstances, it is perhaps rather a subject for surprise that there should be so little of open and avowed Socinianism among us; and the explanation of it is probably to be found in these considerations:—that in the existing condition of society there are many strong influences and motives to restrain men from throwing off a profession of a belief in Christianity;—that there obtains a strong sense of the impossibility, or great difficulty, of effecting anything like an adjustment between the Socinian system of theology, and the obvious meaning and general tenor of Scripture;—and that an attempt of this sort, which should possess anything like plausibility, requires an amount of ingenuity and information, as well as courage, which few comparatively possess. It is in entire accordance with these general observations, that the strain of preaching which prevailed in the Established Churches of this country during the last century,—in the Church of England during the whole century, and in the Church of Scotland during the latter half of it,—was in its whole scope and tendency Socinian. It is admitted, indeed, that the great mass of the clergy of both churches, during the period referred to, were guiltless of any knowledge of theology, or of theological speculations and controversies; and that their preaching, in general, was marked rather by the entire omission, than by the formal and explicit denial, of the peculiar and fundamental doctrines of the Christian system. Still this is quite sufficient to entitle us to call their system of preaching Socinian, as *it left out* the doctrines of the natural guilt and depravity of man,—the divinity and atonement of Christ,—justification by His righteousness,—and regeneration and sanctification by His Spirit; and addressed men as if they were quite able,—without any satisfaction for their sins,—without any renovation of their

moral natures,—without any special supernatural assistance, to do all that was necessary for securing their eternal happiness, and needed only to be reminded of what their duty was, and of the considerations that should induce them to give some attention to the performance of it. And we find likewise, as we might have expected, if the preceding observations are well founded, that whenever any man arose among them who combined superior intelligence, information, and courage, and who was led to attempt to explain and defend his views upon religious subjects, he certainly, and as a matter of course, took Socinian ground, and employed Socinian arguments.

#### *Sec. IV.—Original and Recent Socinianism.*

Before concluding this brief sketch of the Socinian system in general, viewed as a whole, it may be proper to advert to the differences, in point of theological sentiment, between the original and the modern Socinians. Those who, in modern times, have adopted and maintained the great leading principles of the theological system taught by Socinus, commonly refuse to be called by his name, and assume and claim to themselves the designation of Unitarians,—a name which should no more be conceded to them, than that of Catholic should be conceded to Papists, as it implies, and *is intended* to imply, that they *alone* hold the doctrine of the unity of God; while, at the same time, it does not in the least characterize their peculiar opinions as distinguished from those of the Arians, and others who concur with them, in denying the doctrine of the Trinity. They hold all the leading characteristic principles of the system of theology originally developed and compacted by Socinus; and therefore there is nothing unfair, nothing inconsistent with the well understood and reasonable enough practice that ordinarily regulates the application of such designations, in calling them Socinians. They are fond, however, of pointing out the differences, in some respects, between their views and those of the original Socinians, that they may thus lay a plausible foundation for repudiating the name; and it may be useful briefly to notice the most important of these differences.

Socinus and his immediate followers displayed a great deal of ingenuity and courage in devising and publishing a series of plausible perversions of Scripture statements, for the purpose of

excluding from the Bible the divinity and the satisfaction of Christ; but there were some of the views commonly entertained by the orthodox, connected with these matters, which,—though tending rather to enhance our conceptions of the importance of Christ and His work, viewed in relation to the salvation of sinners,—they had not sufficient ingenuity and courage to explain away and reject. These were chiefly His miraculous conception; His having been literally in heaven before He commenced His public ministry; His being invested after His resurrection with great power and dignity, for the government of the world,—for the accomplishment of the objects of His mission, and the final judgment of men; and His being entitled, *on this ground*, to adoration and worship. Socinus and his immediate followers, though certainly they were not lacking in ingenuity and boldness, and though they could not but feel the inconsistency, at least, of the adoration of Christ with the general scope and tendency of their system, were unable to devise any plausible contrivance for excluding these doctrines from Scripture. The miraculous conception of Christ they admitted, but contended, and truly enough, that this of *itself* did not *necessarily* imply either His pre-existence, or any properly superhuman dignity of nature. The texts which so plainly assert or imply that He had been in heaven before He entered upon His public ministry on earth, they could explain only by fabricating the supposition that He was taken up to heaven to receive instruction during the period of His forty days' fast in the wilderness. And they were unable to comprehend how man could profess to believe in the divine authority of the New Testament, and yet deny that Christ is now invested with the government of the world; that He is exercising His power and authority for promoting man's spiritual welfare; that He is one day to determine and judge their final destiny; and that He is entitled to their homage and adoration.

But modern Socinians have found out pretences for evading or denying all these positions. They deny Christ's miraculous conception, and maintain that He was the son of Joseph as well as of Mary, mainly upon the ground of some frivolous pretences for doubting the genuineness of the first two chapters both of Matthew and Luke. Dr Priestley admitted that he was not quite satisfied with any interpretation of the texts that seem to assert that Christ had been in heaven before He taught on earth; but

he gravely assures us that, rather than admit His pre-existence, he would adopt the exploded interpretation of the old Socinians, or make any other supposition that might be necessary, however absurd or offensive.\* Mr Belsham, while he admits that "Christ is now alive, and employed in offices the most honourable and benevolent," yet considers himself warranted in believing that "we are *totally ignorant* of the place where He resides, and of the occupations in which He is engaged;" and that, therefore, "there can be no proper foundation for religious addresses to Him, nor of gratitude for favours now received, nor yet of confidence in His future interposition in our behalf;"† while he contends that all that is implied in the scriptural account of His judging the world, is simply this,—that men's ultimate destiny is to be determined by the application of the instructions and precepts which He delivered when on earth. This was the state of completeness or perfection to which Socinianism had attained in the last generation, or in the early part of this century. There was but one step more which they could take in their descent, and this was the entire adoption of the infidel anti-supernaturalism of the German neologians; and *this* step most of them, within these few years, have taken, both in the United States and in this country. Professor Moses Stuart of Andover, in his Letters to Dr Channing,‡—a very valuable little work on the Trinity and the Divinity of Christ, though not to be implicitly followed,—expressed, in 1819, his apprehension that the Socinians, as soon as they became acquainted with the writings of the German neologians, would embrace their principles, would abandon their elaborate efforts to pervert scriptural statements into an apparent accordance with their views, and adopt the bolder course of openly rejecting the doctrines taught by the apostles as erroneous, while still pretending, in some sense, to believe in the Christian revelation. This apprehension was speedily realized to a large extent in the United States, and is now being realized in this country; so that there seems to be ground to expect that Socinianism proper, as a public profession, will soon be wholly extinguished, and the pantheistic infidelity of Germany, though under a sort of profession of Christianity, be substituted in its place. Perhaps it would be more correct to say

\* Magee's Works, vol. i., p. 59.

† Magee, vol. ii., p. 32; Belsham, "Calm Inquiry," pp. 325, 345.

‡ Letter v., pp. 134-5.



that this has already taken place; for we are not aware that any of those amongst us who used to assume the designation of Unitarians, now openly reject or oppose the pantheistic infidelity which is being so largely circulated in this country.

When this change began to show itself among the American Socinians, it was avowedly advocated by themselves on the ground of the necessity of having some system of religion more spiritual and transcendental,—more suited to the temperament and the aspirations of an earnest age,—than the dry, uninteresting intellectualism of the old Socinians. It was with this view that they had recourse to the pantheism and neology of Germany, which, combining easily with a sort of mystical supersensualism, was fitted to interest the feelings, and to bring into exercise the emotional department of our nature. This is the sort of religion that is now obtruded upon the more literary portion of our community instead of the old Socinianism, which was addressed exclusively to the understanding, and was fitted to exercise and gratify the pride of human reason. It is well to know something of the peculiar form and dress which error in religious matters assumes in our own age and country; but it may tend to guard us against the deluding influence of transcendentalism in religion, if we are satisfied,—as a very little reflection may convince us,—that, with a considerable difference in its dress and garnishing, with a larger infusion of Scripture phraseology, and with much more of an apparent sense and feeling of the unseen and the infinite, it is just, *in its substance*, the old Socinianism, both with respect to the way and manner of knowing divine things, and with respect to the actual knowledge of them obtained in this way. It does not constitute an *essential* difference, that, instead of giving to reason, or the understanding, a supremacy over revelation, and making it the final immediate judge of all truth, the new system extends this controlling power to man's *whole* nature, to his susceptibilities as well as his faculties, and assigns a large influence in judging of divine things to his intuitions and emotions; and the vague and mystic style of contemplation in which it indulges about God, and Christ, and eternity, does not prevent its actual theological system from being fairly described as involving a denial of the guilt and depravity of man, the divinity and atonement of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit, and an assertion of man's full capacity to work out for himself, without any satisfaction for his

sins, or any renovation of his moral nature, the full enjoyment of God's favour, and the highest happiness of which he is capable ; while the only point in which it does differ essentially from the old Socinianism,—namely, the denial of a supernatural revelation, attested by real miracles, which are established by satisfactory historical evidence,—should remove at once every feeling of doubt or difficulty about the propriety of denouncing it as a system of open infidelity.

*Sec. V.—Distinction of Persons in the Godhead.*

Though I have thought it of some importance to give a brief sketch of Socinian theology in general, viewed as a system, and embodying positive doctrines and not mere negations, in regard to all the leading topics which are usually discussed in theological systems, yet I do not mean to enter into anything like a detailed examination and refutation of all the different doctrines of which it is composed, but to confine myself to those with which, in popular apprehension, the name of Socinianism is usually associated,—namely, the Trinity, and the person and atonement of Christ. Their doctrines upon these points may be said to form the chief peculiarities of the Socinians ; and their whole system of doctrine is intimately connected with their views upon these subjects. Besides, I have already had occasion to consider most of the other branches of the Socinian system of theology under other heads,—as in examining the Pelagian controversy, where we met with errors and heresies, substantially the same as those taught by modern Socinians, in regard to the natural character and capacities of man, and the operation and influence of divine grace in preparing men for the enjoyment of happiness ;—and still more fully in examining the Popish system of doctrine as contrasted with the theology of the Reformation. The Church of Rome teaches defective and erroneous doctrines concerning the natural guilt and depravity of man, his natural power or ability to do the will of God, regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and everything connected with his justification, or the way and manner in which men individually obtain or receive the forgiveness of sin and admission to the enjoyment of God's favour,—although the formal Popish doctrine upon most of these subjects is not so flatly and plainly opposed to the word of God as that held upon the same points by Socinians, and even

by many who have passed under the name of Arminians. But as we then endeavoured not only to point out the errors of the Church of Rome upon these topics, but also to explain and illustrate the true doctrines of Scripture respecting them, as taught by the Reformers and laid down in our Confession of Faith, we have said as much as is necessary for the purpose of exposing Pelagian and Socinian errors regarding them. The subject of the Trinity and the person of Christ we have also had occasion to consider, in adverting to the Arian, Nestorian, and Eutychian controversies in the fourth and fifth centuries. We have not, however, discussed these doctrines so fully as their importance demands in some of their general aspects; and we propose now to devote some space to an explanation of the way and manner in which these important doctrines have been discussed in more modern times.

We proceed, then, to consider the doctrine of the distinction of persons in the Godhead. This is commonly discussed in systems of theology under the head "*De Deo*," as it is a portion of the information given us in Scripture with respect to the Godhead, or the divine nature; and the knowledge of it is necessary, if the commonly received doctrine be true, in order to our being acquainted with the whole of what Scripture teaches us concerning God. If there be such a distinction in the Godhead or divine nature, as the received doctrine of the Trinity asserts, then this distinction, as a reality, ought to enter into our conceptions of God. We ought to be aware of its existence,—to understand it, as far as we have the capacity and the means of doing so; and we ought to take it into account in forming our conception of God, even independently of its connection with the arrangements of the scheme of redemption, though it is in *these* that it is most fully unfolded, and that its nature and importance most clearly appear.

There are one or two obvious reflections, suggested by the general nature and character of the subject, to which it may be proper to advert, though it is not necessary to enlarge upon them. The subject, from its very nature, not only relates immediately to the infinite and incomprehensible Godhead, but concerns what may be regarded as the *penetralia* or innermost recesses of the divine nature,—the most recondite and inaccessible department of all that we have ever learned or heard concerning God. It is a subject about which reason or natural theology,—in other words, the works of nature and providence, with the exercise of our

faculties upon them,—give us no information, and about which we know, and *can know* nothing, except in so far as God Himself may have been pleased to give us a direct and immediate revelation concerning it. These considerations are surely well fitted to repress any tendency to indulge in presumptuous speculations with respect to what may be true, or possible, or probable, in regard to this profoundly mysterious subject; and to constrain us to preserve an attitude of profound humility, while we give ourselves to the only process by which we can learn anything with certainty regarding it,—namely, the careful study of God's word,—anxious only to know what God has said about it, what conceptions He intended to convey to us regarding it,—and ready to receive with implicit submission whatever it shall appear that He has declared or indicated upon the subject.

The way in which this question ought to be studied is by collecting together all the statements in Scripture that seem to be in any way connected with it,—that seem, or have been alleged, to assert or to indicate some distinction in the Godhead or divine nature,—to investigate carefully and accurately the precise meaning of all these statements by the diligent and faithful application of all the appropriate rules and materials,—to compare them with each other,—to collect their joint or aggregate results,—and to embody these results in propositions which may set forth accurately the substance of *all* that Scripture really makes known to us regarding it. It is only when we have gone through such a process as this, that we can be said to have done full justice to the question,—that we have really formed our views of it from the word of God, the only source of knowledge respecting it,—and that we can be regarded as fully qualified to defend the opinions we may profess to entertain upon it.

The first point which we are naturally called upon to advert to is the *status questionis*, or what it is precisely that is respectively asserted and maintained by the contending parties. And here we may, in the first instance, view it simply as a question between Trinitarians on the one side, and anti-Trinitarians on the other, without any reference to the differences subsisting among the various sections of the anti-Trinitarians, such as the Arians and the Socinians, about the person of Christ. The substance of what the supporters of the doctrine of the Trinity contend for is, that in the unity of the Godhead there are three distinct persons,



who all possess the divine nature or essence, and that these three persons are not three Gods, but are the one God; while the doctrine maintained on the other side is, that the Scripture does not reveal any such distinction in the divine nature, but that God is one in person as well as in essence or substance; and that the divine nature, or true and proper divinity, is really possessed by no person except by Him who is styled in Scripture the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now here, before going further, it is to be observed that there is brought out an *intelligible difference of opinion*, even though the subject treated of be in its nature and bearings incomprehensible, and though we may not be able to give a precise and exact definition of all the terms employed in the statement of the proposition,—such as the word person in the application here made of it. These two opposite propositions are at least intelligible thus far, that we can form a pretty definite conception of what is the general import of the affirmation and the negation respectively, and can intelligently bring them both into contact and comparison with the evidence adduced, so as to form a judgment as to whether the affirmation or the negation ought to be received as true. But the opponents of the doctrine of the Trinity are accustomed to press us with the question, What do you mean by *persons*, when you assert that there are three persons in the unity of the Godhead? Now, the answer commonly given to this question by the most judicious divines is this: First, they maintain that they are not bound to give a precise and exact definition of the word persons as here employed,—namely, in its application to the divine nature,—since this is not necessary to make the proposition so far intelligible as to admit of its being made the subject of distinct argumentation, and having its truth or falsehood determined by the examination of the appropriate evidence,—a position this, which, though denied in words, is practically conceded by our opponents, when they assert that they can prove from Scripture that no such personal distinction as Trinitarians contend for attaches to the divine nature. Secondly, they admit that they cannot give a full and exact definition of the import of the word *persons*, or of the idea of distinct personality, as *predicated of the divine nature*; and can say little more about it than that it expresses a distinction not identical with, but in some respects analogous to, that subsisting among three different persons among men.

Many of the defenders of the doctrine of the Trinity, following the example of the schoolmen, have indulged to a very great and unwarrantable extent in definitions, explanations, and speculations upon this mysterious and incomprehensible subject; and these attempts at definition and explanation have furnished great advantages to the opponents of the doctrine,—both because their mere variety and inconsistency with each other, threw an air of uncertainty and insecurity around the whole doctrine with which they were connected, and because many of them, taken singly, afforded plausible, and sometimes even solid, grounds for objection. Anti-Trinitarians, in consequence, have usually manifested some annoyance and irritation when the defenders of the doctrine of the Trinity took care to confine themselves, in their definitions and explanations upon the subject, within the limits of what strict logic required of them, and of what the Scriptures seemed to indicate as the real state of the case—the whole amount of what was revealed regarding it. They have laboured to draw them out into explanations and speculations upon points not revealed; and with this view have not scrupled to ridicule their caution, and to ascribe it—as, indeed, Mr Belsham\* does expressly—to “an unworthy fear of the result of these inquiries, and a secret suspicion that the question will not bear examination.” This allegation, however, is really an unfair and unworthy artifice on his part. It is indeed true, that one or two defenders of the doctrine of the Trinity, in their just disapprobation of the extent to which some friends of truth have carried their definitions and explanations upon the subject, have leant somewhat to the opposite extreme, and manifested an unnecessary and unreasonable shrinking even from the use of terms and statements commonly employed and generally sanctioned upon this point, as if afraid to speak about it in any other terms than the *ipsissima verba* of Scripture. But nothing of this sort applies to the great body of the more cautious defenders of the doctrine of the Trinity. They do not pretend to know anything upon this subject but what they find asserted or indicated in Scripture. They aim at no other or higher object than just to embody, in the most appropriate and accurate words which human language furnishes, the substance of what Scripture teaches; and they are under no obligation to explain or defend anything but

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\* “Calm Inquiry,” p. 529.

what they themselves profess to have found in Scripture, and only in so far as they profess to find in Scripture materials for doing so. They find the doctrine of the divine unity clearly taught in Scripture, and therefore they receive this as a great truth which they are bound and determined to maintain, resolved at the same time to admit no doctrine which can be *clearly demonstrated* to be *necessarily* contradictory to, or inconsistent with, the position that God, the Creator and Governor of the world, the object of religious worship, is *one*. But then they profess to find also in Scripture, evidence that Christ is truly and properly God, a possessor of the divine nature; and that the Holy Ghost is also God in the highest sense, and not a mere quality or attribute of God. These two positions about Jesus Christ the Son of God, and about the Holy Ghost, constitute the main and proper field of controversial discussion, in so far as the investigation of the precise meaning of scriptural statements is concerned; but at present, *in considering the state of the question*, we must assume that the Trinitarian doctrines upon these two points have been established from Scripture; for the discussion as to the state of the question really turns substantially on this—Supposing these positions about the Son and the Holy Ghost proved, as we believe them to be, in what way should the teaching of Scripture upon these points be expressed and embodied, so as, when conjoined with the Scripture doctrine of the divine unity (if they can be combined), to bring out the *whole* doctrine which the Scripture teaches concerning the Godhead, or the divine nature? God is one; and therefore if Christ be God, and if the Holy Ghost be God, they must be, with the Father, in some sense, *the one God*, and not separate or additional Gods.

This general consideration seems naturally to indicate or imply, *and of course to warrant*, the position that, while there is unity in the Godhead or divine nature, there is also in it, or attaching to it, some distinction. But Scripture, by affording materials for establishing these positions about the Son and the Holy Ghost, enables us to go somewhat further in explaining or developing this distinction. There is no indication in the Scriptures that proper divinity, or the divine nature or essence, belongs to, or is possessed by, any except the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and therefore we say, in setting forth the substance of what Scripture teaches, that the distinction in the Godhead is a

threefold distinction, or that there are three, and neither more nor fewer, who are represented to us as having the divine nature, or as possessed of proper divinity. Assuming it to be proved that Christ is God, and that the Holy Ghost is God, it seems necessary, and therefore warrantable, if any expression is to be given in human language to the doctrine thus revealed, to say that there are three which possess the divine nature, and are the one God.

It may, indeed, be contended that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, though divinity is ascribed to them, are merely three different names of one and the same object, and do not designate three realities which are in any respect different, except merely in name or in verbal representation. And this is the doctrine which commonly passes under the name of Sabellianism. But then it is contended, on the other hand, that this does not come up to, or correspond with, the representation which the Scripture gives us of the nature and amount of the distinction subsisting in the Godhead or divine nature. It seems very manifest that, if we are to submit our minds to the fair impressions of the scriptural representations upon this subject, the distinction subsisting among the three of whom proper divinity is predicated, is something more than a nominal or verbal distinction,—that it is a reality, and not a mere name,—and that it is set before us as analogous to the distinction subsisting among three men, or three human beings, to whom we usually ascribe distinct personality; and *as there is nothing else within the sphere of our knowledge to which it is represented as analogous or similar*, we are constrained to say,—if we are to attempt to give any expression in language of the idea or impression which the scriptural representations upon the subject seem *plainly intended* to make upon our minds,—that in the unity of the Godhead there is a personal distinction,—there are three persons. And this, accordingly, is the form in which the doctrine of the Trinity has been usually expressed. It is not intended by this form of expression to indicate that the distinction represented as subsisting among the three who are described as possessing the divine nature, is the *same* as that subsisting among three persons among men. On the contrary, the identity of the distinction in the two cases is denied, as not being suitable to the divine nature, and more especially as this would be inconsistent with the doctrine of the divine unity; for as three distinct persons among men are three



men, so, were the distinction in the Godhead held to be identical with this, the three persons in the Godhead must be three Gods. It is merely contended that the threefold distinction in the Godhead is *analogous* or similar in *some respects* to the distinction between three human persons; and the ground of this assertion is, that the scriptural representations upon the subject convey to us such an idea or impression of this distinction subsisting in the Godhead or divine nature,—that this language we cannot but regard as making the nearest approach to expressing it correctly,—that, in fact, from the nature and necessities of the case, we have not the capacity or the means of expressing or describing it in any other way.

We cannot define or describe positively or particularly the nature of the distinction subsisting among the three who are represented as all possessing the divine nature, because, from the necessity of the case, the nature of this distinction must be incomprehensible by us, and because God in His word has not given us any materials for doing so. We just embody in human language the substance of what the word of God indicates to us upon the subject,—we profess to do nothing more,—and we are not called upon to attempt more; to do so would be unwarrantable and sinful presumption. We are called upon to conform our statements as much as possible to what Scripture indicates, neither asserting what Scripture does not teach, nor refusing to assert what it does teach,—though ready not only to admit, but to point out precisely, as far as Scripture affords us materials for doing so, the imperfection or defectiveness of the language which we may be obliged to employ because we have no other; and to apply, as far as our powers of thought and the capacities of the language, which we must employ in expressing our conceptions, admit of it, any limitations or qualifications which Scripture may suggest in the explanation of our statement. It is not from cowardice or timidity, then, or in order to secure an unfair advantage in argument, as our opponents allege, that we refuse to attempt definitions or explanations in regard to the distinction which Scripture makes known to us as subsisting, in combination with unity, in the divine nature. We assert all that Scripture seems to us to sanction or to indicate; and we not only are not bound, but we are not warranted, to do more. We assert the unity of the Godhead. We assert the existence of a threefold distinction in the Godhead,

or the possession of the divine nature and essence by three,—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and that these three are represented to us in Scripture as distinguished from each other in a manner analogous to the distinction subsisting among three different persons among men. We express all this, as it is expressed in our Confession of Faith, by saying that, “In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity,—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.” This is the whole of what our Confession sets forth as the doctrine of Scripture on the subject of the Trinity in general,—for I omit at present any reference to the personal properties by which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are distinguished from each other,—and this is all which any judicious supporter of the doctrine of the Trinity will consider himself called upon to maintain or defend. All that he has to do is just to show that Scripture, fairly and correctly interpreted, warrants and requires him to assent to these positions; *and* that there is nothing in the clear deductions of reason, or in the teaching of Scripture, either in its particular statements or in its general assertion of the divine unity, *which requires him to reject any of them.*

The reason why the opponents of the doctrine of the Trinity are so anxious to draw its defenders into definitions and explanations in regard to the precise nature of the distinction alleged to subsist in the Godhead, is because they hope in this way to get materials for involving them in difficulties and contradictions,—for showing that the doctrine of the Trinity necessarily leads *either* to Tritheism on the one hand, or to Sabellianism on the other,—or, more generally, that it necessarily involves a contradiction, or is inconsistent with the divine unity; while the unwarrantable and injudicious extent to which the friends of the doctrine have often carried their attempts to define the nature of the distinction, and to propound theories for the purpose of explaining the consistency of the distinction with the unity, have afforded too good grounds for the expectations which its opponents have cherished. Anti-Trinitarians are fond of alleging that there is no intermediate position between Tritheism and Sabellianism,—that is, between the view which would introduce three Gods, and thereby flatly contradict the doctrine of the divine unity,—and that which, in order to preserve the unity unimpaired, would virtually explain away the distinction

of persons, and make it merely nominal. And it cannot be disputed, that some who have propounded theories in explanation of the doctrine of the Trinity, have exhibited symptoms of leaning to one or other of these sides—have afforded some plausible grounds for charging them with one or other of these errors.

Tritheism is, of course, a deadly and fundamental error, as it contradicts the doctrine of the divine unity, and accordingly it has scarcely ever been openly and formally taught; but there have been men who, entering into presumptuous speculations about the nature of the distinction subsisting in the Godhead, and being anxious to make this distinction clear and palpable, have been led to lay down positions which could scarcely be said to come short of asserting practically, to all intents and purposes, the existence of three Gods. And as the enemies of the doctrine of the Trinity usually allege that it involves or leads to Tritheism, they catch at such representations as confirm this allegation. And when other divines, leaning to the other extreme, and being more careful to preserve the unity than the distinction, have so explained and refined the distinction as to make it little if anything more than a merely verbal or nominal one,—a tendency observable in the present day in some of the best and soundest of the German divines, such as Neander and Tholuck,\* and of which there are also to be found not obscure indications among ourselves,—then Anti-Trinitarians allege, with some plausibility, that this is just abandoning the doctrine of the Trinity, because, as they say, it cannot be maintained. Indeed, Sabellianism, when it is really held, is consistent enough both with Arianism and Socinianism; for neither the Arians, who believe Christ to be a superangelic creature, nor the Socinians, who believe him to be a mere man, need contend much against an alleged *nominal* distinction in the divine nature, as this does not *necessarily* exclude anything which their peculiar opinions lead them to maintain; and, accordingly, Mr Belsham says,† that Sabellianism “differs only in words from proper Unitarianism.” Unitarians, indeed, are accustomed to distort and misrepresent the views of Trinitarian divines, in order to have more plausible grounds for charging them with a leaning either to Tritheism or Sabellianism; and Mr Belsham formally classes the

\* *Vide* Knapp's Lectures on Christian Theology, p. 142.

† “Calm Inquiry,” p. 504.

great body of the Trinitarians\* under the two heads of Realists and Nominalists, insinuating that the doctrine of the first class is virtually Tritheistic, and that of the second virtually Sabellian; while it would be no difficult matter to show, in regard to some of the most eminent divines whom he has put into those opposite classes, that they did not really differ from each other substantially in the views which they held upon this subject.

A good deal of controversy took place in England, in the end of the seventeenth century, upon this particular aspect of the question,—Dr Wallis, an eminent mathematician, having propounded a theory or mode of explanation upon the subject, which had somewhat the appearance of making the distinction of persons merely nominal; and Dean Sherlock, in opposing it, having appeared to countenance such a distinction or division in the Godhead, as seemed to infringe upon the divine unity, and having been, in consequence, censured by a decree of the University of Oxford. Unitarians have ever since continued to represent this decree as deciding in favour of Sabellianism, and thereby virtually sanctioning Unitarianism, or being a denial of a real personal distinction in the divine nature; while the truth is, that, though both parties went into an extreme, by carrying their attempts at explanation much too far, in different directions,—and were thus led to make unwarrantable and dangerous statements,—they did not differ from each other nearly so much as Unitarians commonly allege, and did not afford any sufficient ground for a charge either of Tritheism or of Sabellianism. Neither party, certainly, intended to assert anything different from, or inconsistent with, the scriptural doctrine laid down in the first of the Thirty-nine Articles, that “in the unity of this Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity,—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,” though it would have been much better had they confined themselves to an exposition of the scriptural evidence in support of the specific positions which make up, or are involved in, this general statement, and restricted their more abstract speculations to the one precise and definite object of merely bringing out what was indispensable to show that none of the positions taught in Scripture, and embodied in this general statement, could be *proved* necessarily to involve a

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\* P. 516.

† Belsham's “Calm Inquiry,” p. 519.



contradiction or a denial of the divine unity. The controversy to which I have referred engaged the attention and called forth the energies of some very eminent men,—South supporting Wallis, and Bingham, the author of the great work on Christian Antiquities, defending Sherlock; while two greater men than any of these,—namely, Stillingfleet and Howe,—may be said to have moderated between the parties. This discussion afforded a handle to the enemies of the doctrine of the Trinity at the time, who made it the subject of a plausible pamphlet, entitled “Considerations on the different explications of the doctrine of the Trinity,”\* and it is still occasionally referred to by them with some triumph; but it seems, in its ultimate results, to have exerted a wholesome influence upon the mode of conducting this controversy, leading to more caution, wisdom, and judgment on the part of the defenders of the truth,—a more careful abstinence from baseless and presumptuous theories and explanations,—and a more uniform regard to the great principles and objects which have just been stated, as those that ought to regulate the exposition and investigation of this important subject.

*Sec. VI.—Trinity and Unity.*

The importance of attending carefully to the true and exact state of the question, in regard to the doctrine of the Trinity, is fully evinced by this consideration, that the opponents of the doctrine, base, *directly and immediately upon the state of the question*, a charge of its involving a contradiction, and of its being inconsistent with the admitted truth of the unity of God. The duty of Trinitarians, in regard to this subject of settling, so far as they are concerned, the state of the question, ought to be regulated by far higher considerations than those which originate in a regard to the advantages that may result from it in controversial discussion. The positions which we undertake to maintain and defend in the matter,—and this, of course, settles the state of the question in so far as we are concerned,—should be those only, and neither more nor less, which we believe to be truly contained in, or certainly deducible from, the statements of

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\* This pamphlet is discussed in the Preface to Stillingfleet's *Viindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity*.

Scripture,—those only which the word of God seems to require us to maintain and defend, without any intermixture of mere human speculations or attempts, however ingenious and plausible, at definitions, explanations, or theories, beyond what the Scripture clearly sanctions or demands. The defenders of the doctrine of the Trinity have often neglected or violated this rule, by indulging in unwarranted explanations and theories upon the subject, and have thereby afforded great advantages to its opponents, of which they have not been slow to avail themselves. And when, warned of their error by the difficulties in which they found themselves involved, and the advantages which their opponents, who have generally been careful to act simply as defenders or respondents, seemed in consequence to enjoy, they curtailed their speculations within narrower limits, and adhered more closely to the maintenance of scriptural positions, their opponents have represented this as the effect of conscious weakness or of controversial artifice. The truth, however, is, that this mode of procedure is the intrinsically right course, which ought never to have been departed from,—which they were bound to return to, from a sense of imperative duty, and not merely from a regard to safety or advantage, whenever, by any means, their deviation from it was brought home to them,—and which it is not the less incumbent upon us to adhere to, because the errors and excesses of former defenders of the truth, and the advantages furnished by these means to opponents, may have been, in some measure, the occasion of leading theologians to see more clearly, and to pursue more steadily, what was in itself, and on the ground of its own intrinsic excellence, the undoubted path of duty in the matter.

But though anti-Trinitarians are much fonder of dealing with the particular definitions, explanations, and theories of individual theologians upon this subject, than with those general and well-weighed statements which we have quoted both from the English Articles and our own Confession of Faith,—and which certainly contain the substance of all that Scripture teaches, and consequently of all that we should undertake to maintain and defend; yet it must be acknowledged that they commonly allege that the doctrine of the Trinity, even when most cautiously and carefully stated, involves a contradiction in itself, and is inconsistent with the doctrine of the divine unity; and to this we would now advert.

It will be understood, from the exposition of principles formerly

given, that we do not deny that such allegations are relevant, and that they must in some way or other be disposed of ; and it will also be remembered, that sufficient grounds have been adduced for maintaining the two following positions upon this point : First, that when the Scripture is admitted in any fair sense to be the rule of faith, *the first* step should be simply to ascertain, in the faithful and honest use of all appropriate means, what it teaches, or was intended to teach, upon the subject,—that this investigation should be prosecuted fairly to its conclusion, without being disturbed by the introduction of collateral considerations derived from other sources, until a clear result is reached,—that an allegation of intrinsic contradiction or of contrariety to known truth, if adduced against the result as brought out in this way, should be kept in its proper place *as an objection*, and dealt with as such,—that, if established, it should be fairly and honestly applied, not to the effect of *reversing* the judgment, already adopted upon competent and appropriate grounds, as to what it is that Scripture teaches (for that is irrational and illogical), but to the effect of rejecting the divine authority of the Scriptures. Secondly, that in conducting the latter part of the process of investigation above described, we are entitled to argue upon the assumption that the doctrine of the Trinity has been really established by scriptural authority,—we are under no obligation to do more than simply to show that the allegation of contradiction, or of inconsistency, with other truths, has not been proved ; and we should attempt nothing more than what is thus logically incumbent upon us. As we are not called upon to enter into an exposition of the scriptural evidence, we have no opportunity of applying the principles laid down under the former of these two heads, though it is very important that they should be remembered. It is chiefly by the positions laid down in the second head, that we must be guided in considering this allegation of our opponents.

We assume, then,—as we are entitled, upon the principles explained, to do, in discussing this point,—that it has been established, by satisfactory evidence, as a doctrine taught in Scripture, that true and proper divinity is possessed by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost ; that the divine nature and perfections are possessed by three ; and that, while there is only one God, and while these three, therefore, *are* the one God, there is yet such a distinction among them, *as is, in some respects, analogous* to the

distinction subsisting between three persons among men,—such a distinction as lays a foundation for attributing to each of them some things which are not attributable to the others, and for applying to them the distinct personal pronouns, I, Thou, and He. This is the substance of what Scripture seems plainly to teach upon the subject; and we embody it in such statements as these, just because we cannot possibly represent or express it in any other way. Now, it is alleged that this doctrine,—which, in the meantime, we are entitled to assume, is taught in Scripture,—involves a contradiction in itself, and is inconsistent with the divine unity; and upon the principles which have been explained, we have merely to show that *this* allegation is not substantiated—is not proved.

The first part of the allegation,—namely, that the doctrine directly and in itself involves a contradiction,—is very easily disposed of, as it is manifestly destitute of any solid foundation. In order to constitute a contradiction, it is necessary that there be both an affirmation and a negation, not only concerning the same thing, but concerning the same thing *in the same respect*. To say that one God is three Gods, or that three persons are one person, is, of course, an express contradiction, or, as it is commonly called, a contradiction in terms. To affirm, directly or by plain implication, that God is one in the same respect in which He is three, would also amount to a plain contradiction, and, of course, could not be rationally believed. But to assert that God is in one respect *one*, and in another and different respect *three*,—that He is one in nature, essence, or substance,—and that He is three with respect to personality, or personal distinction (and this is all that the received doctrine of the Trinity requires or implies),—can never be shown to contain or involve a contradiction. It certainly does not contain a contradiction in terms; for we not only do not assert, but expressly deny, that God is one and three in the same respect, that He is one in the same respect in which He is three, *or* that He is three in the same respect in which He is one; and when the defenders of the doctrine adhere, as they ought to do, to a simple assertion of what they believe to be taught or indicated in Scripture, and of what is declared in our symbolical books, without indulging in unwarranted explanations and baseless theories, it is impossible to show that the doctrine involves, by necessary implication, any appearance of a contradiction.



Accordingly, the opponents of the doctrine of the Trinity are more disposed to dwell upon the other part of the allegation,—namely, that it is inconsistent with the known and admitted truth of the divine unity; and it is chiefly by pressing this position that they have succeeded in drawing the supporters of the doctrine into the field of explanations and theories, directed to the object of making, in some measure, intelligible how it is that unity and personal distinction,—unity in one respect and trinity in another,—are consistent with each other. The temptation to attempt this is, to ingenious men, somewhat strong; but the results of the attempts which have been made have always, in consequence of the limited amount of the information which God has been pleased to reveal to us upon the subject, and the imperfection of the human faculties and of human language, proved wholly unsuccessful in effecting anything really substantial and valuable; and have commonly been attended only with mischief, as serving to furnish plausible grounds to opponents to allege, *either* that, to adopt the language of the Athanasian creed, we confound the persons, *or* divide the substance,—that is, fall, or seem to fall, into the opposite extremes of Sabellianism or Tritheism.

Of course very different measures of wisdom and caution have been exhibited by different defenders of the Trinity in the exposition and application of these explanations and theories, illustrations and analogies, which they have brought to bear upon this subject. They have been propounded with some diversity of spirit, and they have been applied to different purposes. Sometimes they have been put forth boldly, dogmatically, and recklessly; and at other times with much more modesty, diffidence, and circumspection. Sometimes they have been urged as if they afforded positive proofs, or at least strong presumptions, of the *truth* of the doctrine of the Trinity, or of the combination of unity and distinction which it implies, and sometimes they have been adduced merely as affording proofs or presumptions of its possibility; while at other times, again, they have been brought forward, not as proofs or presumptions of anything, but merely as illustrations of what it was that was meant to be asserted. When applied to the last of these purposes, and used merely as illustrations of what is meant, there is no great harm done, provided they are restricted carefully to this purpose. When adduced for the first of these purposes,—namely, as presumptions or proofs of the truth of the doctrine,—

this, from the nature of the case, can lead only to baseless and presumptuous speculation.

But even when applied only to the second of these purposes,—namely, to afford proofs or presumptions of possibility,—they ought to be regarded as unnecessary, unsafe, and inexpedient. Strictly speaking, we are not bound to produce positive proof even of the *possibility* of such a combination of unity and distinction as the doctrine of the Trinity predicates of the divine nature, but merely to show negatively that the impossibility of it, alleged upon the other side, has not been established; and the whole history of the controversy shows the great practical importance of our restricting ourselves within the limits beyond which the rules of strict reasoning do not require us to advance. The only question which we will ever consent to discuss with our opponents upon this point,—apart, of course, from the investigation of the meaning of Scripture,—is this: *Has it been clearly proved* that the received doctrine of the Trinity, as set forth in our symbolical books, necessarily involves anything inconsistent with the unity of the Godhead? And there need be no hesitation in answering *this* question in the negative. No proof of the allegation has been produced resting upon a firm and solid basis,—no argument that can be shown to be logically connected with any principles of which we have clear and adequate ideas. It is the divine nature,—the nature of the infinite and incomprehensible God,—which the question respects; and on this ground there is the strongest presumption against the warrantableness of positive assertions on the part of men as to what is possible or impossible in the matter. The substance of the allegation of our opponents is, that it is impossible that there can be such a distinction in the divine nature as the doctrine of the Trinity asserts, because God is one; and they must establish this position by making out a clear and certain bond of connection between the admitted unity of God and the impossibility of the distinction asserted. The substance of what we maintain upon the point is this,—that every attempt to establish this logical bond of connection, involves the use of positions which cannot be proved; and which cannot be proved, just because they assume a larger amount of clear and certain knowledge, *both with respect to the unity and the distinction*, than men possess, or have the capacity and the means of attaining.

The unity of the Godhead or divine nature being universally

admitted, men are very apt to suppose that they understand it fully,—that they know more of what it means and implies, than they do. But the unity of the Godhead is really as incomprehensible by men as any of His other attributes,—a position confirmed and illustrated by the fact, that it is doubtful whether the proper nature and ground of the divine unity can, in any strict and proper sense, be ascertained and established by natural reason. There has been a very general sense, among the greatest men who have discussed this subject, of the difficulty of establishing the strict and proper unity of the Godhead on mere rational grounds, apart from revelation. It has generally been regarded, indeed, as easy enough to establish that there is one Being (and not more) who is the actual Creator and Governor of the world; but it has commonly been felt to be somewhat difficult to deduce certainly, from anything cognisable by the natural faculties of man, a proposition asserting unity, in any definite sense, of the Godhead, or divine nature, intrinsically, and as such. And this fact is fitted to show us that it is not so easy to comprehend what the divine unity is, or implies, as it might at first sight appear to be. The Scriptures plainly declare the divine unity, by informing us not merely that the world was created, and has ever been governed, by one Being, but that the Godhead, or divine nature, is essentially one. But they give us no detailed or specific information as to the nature and grounds of this unity,—as to what it consists in; and of course they afford us no definite materials for determining what is, and what is not, consistent with it. And if it be true, as we are entitled at present to assume, that the same revelation which alone certainly makes known to us the strict and proper unity of the divine nature, does also reveal to us a certain distinction existing in that nature, the fair inference is,—that the unity and the distinction are quite consistent with each other, though we may not be able to make this consistency palpable either to ourselves or others.

It is scarcely alleged, though it is sometimes insinuated, by our opponents, that the admitted unity of the divine nature necessarily excludes *all* distinctions, of every kind and degree. It is very manifest, in general, from the nature of the case,—the exalted and incomprehensible character of the subject, and the scanty amount of information which God has been pleased to communicate to us regarding it, or which, perhaps, we were capable of

receiving,—that we have no very adequate or certain materials for determining positively, in any case, that any particular alleged distinction is inconsistent with the divine unity; and, in these circumstances, *and under these conditions*, the position of our opponents is, *and must be*, that they undertake to prove, that the particular distinction implied in the doctrine of the Trinity is inconsistent with the unity of God. Now, if the scriptural doctrine were to be identified with the explanations and theories about it which have been sometimes propounded by its friends, it might be admitted that considerations have been adduced, in support of the alleged inconsistency, that were possessed not only of plausibility but of weight; but against the doctrine itself, as taught in Scripture and as set forth in our standards, nothing of real weight has been, or can be, adduced,—nothing but arguments *ab ignorantia* and *ad ignorantiam*. We profess to give no further explanation of the nature of the distinction, except this, that it is set before us in Scripture as a real, and not a merely nominal distinction,—a distinction of existences and objects, and not of mere names and manifestations,—and as analogous in *some respects*, though not in all, to the distinction subsisting between three persons among men; *and there is nothing in any one of these ideas*, to which a definite argument, clearly inferring incompatibility with unity, can be shown to be logically attachable. It would be no difficult matter to show,—but it is not worth while,—that the attempts which have been made to establish such a connection, either, in the first place, proceed upon certain conceptions of the precise nature of the distinction of persons, which we disclaim, and are under no sort of obligation to admit; or, secondly, resolve into vague and general assertions on points which are beyond our cognisance and comprehension, and on which it seems equally unwarrantable and presumptuous to affirm or deny anything; or, thirdly and finally, are reducible to the extravagant position, more or less openly asserted and maintained, that the divine unity necessarily excludes all distinction, of every kind, and in every degree.

The steady application of these general considerations to the actual attempts which have been made by anti-Trinitarians to prove that the doctrine of the Trinity necessarily involves what is inconsistent with the divine unity, will easily enable us to see *that they have not proved* their position. And here we should rest,



relying for the positive proof of all that we believe and maintain, upon the authority of God in His word,—revealing Himself to us,—making known to us concerning Himself what we could not know in any measure from any other source, or by any other means, but an immediate supernatural revelation. The doctrine is above reason; it could not have been discovered by it, and cannot be fully comprehended by it, even after it has been revealed; but it cannot be proved to be contrary to reason, or to be inconsistent with any other truth which, from any source, we know regarding God. We can, of course, form no definite or adequate conception of this mysterious distinction attaching to the divine nature; but we have no reason to expect that we should,—we have every reason to expect that we should *not*, since we have no definite or adequate conceptions of many other things about God, even though these things are discoverable, in some measure, by the exercise of our natural faculties. We find great, or rather, insuperable, difficulties in attempting to explain, in words, the nature of this distinction in the Godhead; because, independently of the very inadequate conceptions which alone we *could* form of such a subject from the nature of the case, it has, of necessity, been made known to us, in so far as we do know it, through the imperfect medium of human language, and by means of representations which are necessarily derived from what takes place or is realized among men, and must therefore very imperfectly apply to the divine nature. In this, as well as in other matters connected with God, we must exclude from our conceptions everything that results from, or savours of, the peculiar qualities of man's finite and dependent nature, and admit nothing into our conceptions inconsistent with the known perfections and properties of God; while, at the same time, we must take care to exclude nothing which He has really made known to us concerning Himself, on the ground of our not being able fully to comprehend how it is, that *all* the truths which He has made known to us concerning Himself can be combined in Him. He has revealed to us that He is *one*, but He has also revealed to us that there are three who have true and proper divinity,—who have the divine nature and perfections. We, in consequence, maintain that, in the unity of the Godhead,—in the common possession of the one undivided and indivisible divine nature,—there are three persons; and without meaning to assert,—nay, while expressly

denying,—that the idea of distinct personality applies to the divine nature in the same sense as to the human, we use this mode of expression, because it is really the only way in which we can embody the idea, which scriptural statements convey to us, of the distinction existing in the Godhead,—namely, as being analogous *in some respects* to the distinction subsisting among three different persons among men,—an idea, however, to be always regulated and controlled by the principle, that the three to whom divinity is ascribed, though called persons, because we have no other expressions that would convey *any portion* of the idea which Scripture sets before us on the subject, are not three Gods,—as three persons among men are three men,—but *are* the one God.

It may perhaps be supposed, that though, upon principles formerly explained, Trinitarians are not obliged to give any full or exact definition of what they mean by persons, or by distinct personality, as predicated of the divine nature, when they merely lay down the general position, that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, yet that they are bound to attempt something more precise or specific in defining or describing personality, when they lay down the position that the Holy Ghost *is a person*, since the idea of personality is in this position more distinctly held up, as the precise point to be established. Now it is true, that the proof that the Holy Ghost is a person, is a fundamental point in the proof of the doctrine of the Trinity. It is scarcely disputed that the Holy Ghost is God, is divine; the main controversy turns upon the question of His personality, which is usually denied by anti-Trinitarians. But the personality of the Spirit can be proved satisfactorily by appropriate evidence, without our being under the necessity of giving any exact definition of what personality means, as applied to the divine nature. It is to be observed, that the discussion about the personality of the Spirit necessarily involves the maintenance of one or other of two alternatives, which really exhaust the subject. The Holy Spirit either is a mere attribute or power of God, *or* is a distinct person from the Father and the Son. Now, we can form a pretty definite conception of the general import of these two opposite or alternative propositions, without needing or being able to define precisely and positively wherein the idea of distinct personality, as applied to the divine nature, differs from the same idea as applied to the human nature,—so far, at least, as to be able intelligently to estimate the

bearing and the weight of the evidence adduced for, and against, them respectively. *Upon this state of the question*, without any exact or adequate idea of personality, we are able to adduce satisfactory evidence from Scripture, that the Holy Ghost is not a mere power or attribute of God, or to disprove one of the alternative positions. And this of itself is warrant enough for maintaining the truth of the other, which is the only alternative, especially as it holds generally of a large portion of our knowledge of God, that we approximate to an accurate statement of what we know of Him chiefly by negatives; while, at the same time, the scriptural evidence, which proves that the Spirit is not a mere power or attribute, manifestly brings Him before our minds, viewed in His relations to the Father and the Son, in an aspect analogous *in some respects* to the idea we entertain of the relation subsisting between distinct persons among men; and this warrants the application of the idea,—of course with the necessary modification,—and also of the phraseology of distinct personality.

*Sec. VII.—Evidence for the Divinity of Christ.*

I have endeavoured, in what has been said upon the subject of the Trinity, to guard against the tendency to indulge in unwarranted definitions, explanations, and theories upon this topic,—a tendency which too many of the defenders of the truth have exhibited,—by pointing out not only its inexpediency and danger, so far as mere controversial objects are concerned, but its unwarrantableness and impropriety, on higher grounds, as a matter of duty. I have attempted to mark out precisely the *extent* to which the supporters of the doctrine of the Trinity are called upon, in strict reasoning, to go, in the discussion of abstract points connected with this matter; and have, I think, rigidly confined my own observations upon it within the limits thus defined. But still I have some apprehension that, since I am not to enter into a detailed examination of the scriptural evidence in support of the doctrine, the prominence which has been given to abstract discussions regarding it, may convey an erroneous impression of the comparative importance of the different departments of inquiry that constitute a full investigation of the subject, and may lead some to overlook the paramount, the supreme importance of making themselves acquainted with the scriptural evidence of the

different positions, which may be said to constitute the doctrine, as it is generally received amongst us. On this account, I wish again to advert to the considerations, that this doctrine is one of pure revelation; that we know, and can know, nothing about the distinction in the divine nature which it asserts, except what is taught us in the sacred Scriptures; and that the *first* step that ought to be taken in a full investigation of the subject, should be to collect the scriptural statements which bear upon it,—to examine carefully their meaning and import,—and then to embody the substance of the different positions thus ascertained, as constituting the doctrine which we believe and maintain upon the subject. The doctrine which we believe and maintain should be reached or got at in this way; and the materials by which we defend it should be all derived from this source. We should hold nothing upon the subject which is not taught in Scripture; and we should be so familiar with the scriptural grounds of all that we profess to believe regarding it, as to be able to defend, from the word of God, the *whole* of what we believe, against all who may assail it. I have already made some general observations upon the Socinian method of interpreting Scripture, and given a warning against some of the general plausibilities by which they usually endeavour to defend their system against the force of scriptural arguments, and to obscure or diminish the strength of the support which Scripture gives to the scheme of doctrine that has been generally maintained in the Christian church; and on the subject of the Scripture evidence, I can now only make a few observations of a similar kind, bearing more immediately upon the doctrine of the Trinity, and directed, not to the object of stating, illustrating, and enforcing the evidence itself, but merely suggesting some considerations that may be useful in the study of it.

The great fundamental position which we assert and undertake to prove from Scripture is this,—that true and proper divinity is ascribed to, that the divine nature is possessed by, three,—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is the basis or foundation, or rather, it is the sum and substance, of the doctrine of the Trinity; and everything, of course, depends upon the establishment of this position. The deity of the Father is not a matter of controversy; it is universally admitted. The question, so far as the Holy Spirit is concerned, turns, as I have already explained, more



upon His personality than upon His divinity; for that the Spirit is God, in the highest sense, or is truly divine, is scarcely disputed. For these and other reasons, the main field of controversial discussion on this whole subject of the Trinity, has been the true and proper divinity of the Son,—that is, of Jesus Christ the Saviour of sinners. Of course, all the *general* objections usually adduced against the doctrine of the Trinity, apply in all their force to the ascription of proper Godhead, or of the divine nature, to any person but the Father; so that, when the divinity of the Son is proved, all further controversy about the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit, *so far as these general topics are concerned*, is practically at an end. When a *plurality* of divine persons has been established, all the leading general points on which anti-Trinitarians insist are virtually negatived, and excluded from the field. If it be proved that there is more than one person in the Godhead, there can be no *general* reason why there should not be a third; and it is on this account that the investigation of the proper scriptural evidence in regard to the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit has been usually somewhat less disturbed by extraneous and collateral considerations, by allegations of the impossibility of the doctrine contended for being true, and by violent efforts at perversion which these allegations were thought to justify, than the investigation into the scriptural evidence for the divinity of the Son.

But while the divinity of Jesus Christ has thus become, perhaps, the principal battle-field on this whole question, and while, therefore, the evidence bearing upon it ought to be examined with peculiar care, it is right to remark that Trinitarians profess to find evidence in Scripture bearing directly upon the doctrine of the Trinity in general,—that is, bearing generally upon a plurality, and, more particularly, upon a trinity of persons in the Godhead, independently of the specific evidence for the divinity of Jesus Christ, and the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, it is common in writers who enter fully into the discussion of this subject, to divide the scriptural evidence in support of the doctrine of the Trinity into two heads: first, that derived from passages which appear to intimate a plurality of persons in the Godhead, and from those which seem to speak of the three persons together, or in conjunction; and, secondly, that derived from passages which are alleged to assert or imply the divinity of Christ,

and the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit,—the second of these heads comprising much the larger amount of scriptural materials. The principal thing in the Bible which has been regarded by many as intimating a plurality of persons in the Godhead in general, without conveying to us any further or more definite information upon the subject, is the frequent use in the Old Testament of the plural appellation, as it is called, Elohim, or Aleim, the ordinary name of God, used in the plural form, and joined with nouns and verbs in the singular. Some Trinitarians have disclaimed any assistance from this branch of evidence, explaining the peculiarity by what they call the plural of majesty or excellence; while others, and among the rest Dr John Pye Smith,—who commonly leans to the extreme of caution, and is very careful to put no more weight upon a proof than it is clearly and certainly able to bear,—have, with apparently better reason, been of opinion that this singular construction has some real weight in the proof of the doctrine of the Trinity; or, as Dr Smith says, that “this peculiarity of idiom *originated* in a design to *intimate* a plurality in the nature of the One God; and that thus, in connection with other circumstances calculated to suggest the same conception, it was intended to excite and prepare the minds of men for the more full declaration of this unsearchable mystery, which should in proper time be granted.”\*

The chief proofs which are usually adduced in support of three distinct persons, or in which the three persons of the Godhead appear to be spoken of together, or in conjunction, and yet are distinguished from each other, are the formula of baptism and the apostolic benediction, as they are commonly called (for most Trinitarians now admit that there is a decided preponderance of critical evidence against the genuineness of 1 John v. 7, usually spoken of as the three heavenly witnesses). And here, too, there has been some difference of opinion among Trinitarians as to the weight of the evidence furnished by the passages referred to,—some thinking that these passages by themselves do not furnish what can be properly called a proof, a distinct and independent proof, of the doctrine, but only a presumption; and that, after it has been proved by a clearer and more conclusive evidence that

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\* Scripture Testimony, vol. i., pp. 483, 484; Hopkins' Primitive Creed Examined and Explained, pp. 321-337.

the Son is God, and that the Holy Spirit is possessed of divinity and personality, these passages may be regarded as corroborating the conclusion, and confirming the general mass of evidence; while others are of opinion,—and, I think, upon sufficient grounds,—that the language employed upon these occasions,—the manner and circumstances in which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are there conjoined,—are plainly fitted, and should *therefore* be held as having been *intended*, to convey to us the idea that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three distinct persons, and that they are possessed of equal power and dignity, or, in other words, that they equally possess the same divine nature.

Still, the difference of opinion that has been exhibited by Trinitarians as to the validity and sufficiency of these proofs of the doctrine of the Trinity in general, has concurred with other causes formerly mentioned, in bringing about the result that the controversy has usually turned mainly upon the passages of Scripture classed under the second head, as those which are regarded as establishing the true and proper divinity of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit, and especially of Jesus Christ. All the supporters of the doctrine of the Trinity of course profess, and undertake to prove from Scripture, that Jesus Christ is truly and properly divine,—that He is God, not in any secondary or subordinate, but in the proper and highest, sense; and is thus, equally with the Father, a possessor of the one divine nature or substance; and they have agreed harmoniously, in the main, in selecting, classifying, and applying the varied and abundant scriptural evidence by which this great truth is established. They have been in the habit of classifying the evidence under *four* heads, and there is probably no better mode of classifying it.

First, The proof from Scripture that divine names and titles are applied to Christ; and under this head the points to be established are these two: first, that names and titles are ascribed to Christ which are exclusively appropriated to the one true God; and, secondly, that names and titles are applied to Christ which, though not exclusively appropriated to the one true God, and sometimes applied to creatures in a secondary and subordinate sense, are yet applied to Christ in *such* circumstances, in such a manner, and with such accompanying adjuncts, as to furnish evidence that the Scriptures were fitted, and, *of course*, intended,

to impress upon us the conviction that they apply to Christ in a sense in which they do not, and cannot, apply to any creature,—in the same sense in which they are applied to the Father.

Secondly, The proof that divine qualities and attributes, such as omnipotence and omniscience, are ascribed to Christ; attributes which manifestly cannot belong to any finite or created being, and must be exclusively appropriated to the divine nature,—to the one true God.

Thirdly, The proof that acts, or works, are ascribed to Christ, which are not competent to any finite or created being; and which require or imply the possession and exercise of divine perfections and prerogatives,—such as the creation and government of the world, and the determining the everlasting destinies of men.

Fourthly, The proof that Christ is entitled to divine worship and homage, to the adoration and the confidence, the submission and the obedience, which creatures ought to give to their Creator, and to none else, and which are claimed in Scripture as due exclusively to the one true God.

Any one of these departments of proof, when really established by a careful investigation of the precise meaning and import of particular statements, would be sufficient to settle the question of the true and proper divinity of Christ; but when each and all of these positions can be established, as has been often proved, by various and abundant scriptural evidence,—formal and incidental, palpable and recondite,—by many passages of all different degrees of clearness and explicitness,—by many proofs, corroborated by innumerable presumptions, there is presented a mass of evidence, which, it is not to be wondered at, has satisfied the great body of those who, in any age, have investigated this subject, and have assumed the name of Jesus,—that He whom they call their Lord and Master is indeed God over all, blessed for evermore.

Of course, the establishment of each of these four leading positions concerning Christ, depends wholly upon the particular scriptural evidence adduced in support of it,—upon the result of a careful examination of the precise meaning and import of particular statements contained in Scripture,—upon the proof that can be adduced that there are statements contained in Scripture which, when investigated in the fair and honest application of *all* the principles and rules of sound interpretation, bring out, as the general result, that if the Scriptures were fitted and designed to



be our rule of faith, it was then wished, intended, and expected, that we should believe all this concerning Jesus Christ.

All the various scriptural statements which have been adduced in support of these positions concerning Christ, have been made the subjects of controversial discussion. It has been contended by Socinians, that there is nothing in Scripture which, rightly interpreted, furnishes sufficient or satisfactory evidence that Jesus Christ had any existence until He was born in Bethlehem,—that He had any other nature than the human,—that He was anything more than a mere man; and it has been contended by Arians, that while Christ existed in a higher nature than the human before the creation of the world, He still belonged to the class of creatures,—that He is called God only in a secondary or subordinate sense,—and is not possessed of true and proper divinity,—is not a possessor of the one divine nature; and both these parties have exerted themselves to clear away the scriptural evidence adduced in support of Christ's proper divinity. The Arians, indeed, join with the Trinitarians in proving, against the Socinians, that there are scriptural statements which clearly and certainly prove that Jesus Christ existed before the creation of the world, and was possessed of a nature higher and more exalted than the human. And, in giving a detailed and digested exposition of the Scripture evidence concerning Christ, it is perhaps best and most expedient to begin with establishing those positions which Arians concur with us in holding in opposition to the Socinians, by proving Christ's pre-existence and superhuman dignity; and then, abandoning the Arians, to proceed to the proof that He had a nature not only superhuman, but truly and properly divine, by adducing and expounding the evidence of the four leading positions regarding Him formerly stated. But, of course, the proof of His true and proper divinity shuts out at once not only Socinianism, but all the various gradations of Arianism, as it necessarily implies that He was, as our Confession of Faith says, "of one substance, power, and eternity with the Father." And the general features of the method of disposing of the Scripture evidence for the divinity of Christ, to which alone we can here advert, are substantially the same, in the case of all the different classes of anti-Trinitarians.

I need not add anything to the general observations formerly made, about the Socinian practice, usually followed also by the

Arians, of mixing up the general objections to the doctrine upon abstract grounds, with the investigation of the proper meaning of scriptural statements,—of insisting that the doctrine, if true, would have been more frequently mentioned, and more clearly asserted,—and of demanding that we shall prove, in regard to the scriptural passages we adduce, not only that they may, but that they *must*, bear the meaning we assign to them, and cannot possibly admit of any other. All these different features of the method they employ, which they lay down beforehand as general principles, are directed to one single object,—namely, to diminish a little the amount of torture which it may be necessary to apply to particular scriptural statements, with the view of showing that they do not furnish any satisfactory evidence for Christ's divinity. It is evident that, if these general principles were conceded to them in all the latitude of construction which they commonly put upon them, a smaller amount of perverting power would be necessary to make out a plausible case in support of the positions they maintain. They are pretty distinctly conscious that it is necessary for them to subject scriptural statements to a considerable amount of pressure, in order to distort and pervert them to such an extent, as that they shall appear to give no very certain sound in support of Christ's divinity; and as they are aware that this is rather apt to disgust honest men, they are naturally solicitous to do with as little of it as they can. It was evidently with this view that they devised those principles of interpretation to which we have referred; for if these be well founded, a smaller amount of distortion and perversion will be necessary for accomplishing their object. It is enough to remember, upon the other side, that *all* that we are called upon to do in order to establish the doctrine of Christ's divinity, is just to show that Scripture, fairly and honestly explained, according to the recognised principles and rules of sound interpretation, does *teach*, and was *intended* to teach, it.

The opponents of Christ's divinity, after having attempted by these general considerations to make provision for effecting their object with the minimum of perversion, proceed to the work of showing, minutely and in detail, that the scriptural statements we adduce do not teach, or at least do not necessarily teach, the doctrine of Christ's divinity. They are not unfrequently somewhat skilled in the technicalities and minutiae of biblical criticism; and some of them have manifested very considerable ingenuity in

applying all these to the object they have in view, which may be said to be, in general, to involve the meaning of scriptural statements in obscurity,—to show that no certain meaning can be brought out of them,—and, more particularly, that it is not by any means clear or certain that they bear the meaning which Trinitarians assign to them. I cannot enter into any detail of the various methods they have employed for this purpose. I may merely mention a specimen.

One very common course they adopt is, to break down a statement into its separate words, phrases, and clauses, and then to try to get up some evidence that the particular words, phrases, or clauses, or some of them, have been employed in some other passages of Scripture in a somewhat different sense from that in which Trinitarians understand them in the passage under consideration; and then they usually reckon this,—aided, of course, by an insinuation of the impossibility or incredibility of the doctrine of their opponents,—as sufficient ground for maintaining that there is nothing in the passage to support it; while, in such cases, Trinitarians have undertaken to prove, and have proved, either that the words, phrases, or clauses are never used in Scripture in the sense which Socinians and Arians would ascribe to them; or that, even though this sense might be, in certain circumstances, admissible, yet that it is precluded, *in the passage under consideration*, by a fair application to it of the acknowledged rules of grammar, philology, and exegesis; and that these rules, fairly applied to the whole passage, viewed in connection with the context, establish that the Trinitarian interpretation brings out its true meaning and import. The great leading impression which the Socinian mode of dealing with the Scripture evidence for the divinity of Christ, is fitted to produce in the minds of those who may be somewhat influenced by it, and may thus have become disposed to regard it with favour, is this,—that most of the passages which they may have been accustomed to regard as evidences of Christ's divinity, have been so dealt with singly and separately as to be neutralized or withdrawn, to be thrown into the background, or taken out of the way; so that, while there is much in Scripture, as Socinians admit, which would no doubt concur and harmonize with the Trinitarian view, *if that view were once established*, yet that there are few, if any, passages which seem to afford a clear and positive proof of it, and that thus the foundation is taken

away, and the whole superstructure of course must fall to the ground. This is the impression which is sometimes apt to be produced when we read a plausible Socinian commentary upon the scriptural statements adduced in support of Christ's divinity, and find that every one of them has been tampered with, with more or less plausibility, and that a great variety of considerations have been suggested, wearing a critical aspect, and all tending to render the Trinitarian interpretation of them uncertain or precarious. Now, the considerations that ought to be applied to counteract this impression, are chiefly these two:—

First, There are some passages of Scripture under each of the four leading divisions of the proof, which *cannot* be explained away without a manifest violation of the recognised principles of interpretation; and these constitute a firm and stable foundation, on which the whole mass of cumulative and corroborating evidence may securely rest. Trinitarians, of course, do not maintain that all the Scripture passages usually adduced in support of Christ's divinity are equally clear and explicit,—are equally unassailable by objections and presumptions; and they do not deny that there are some which, taken by themselves and apart from the rest, might admit of being explained away, or understood in a different sense. All the defenders of the doctrine of the Trinity do not attach the same weight to all the different passages commonly adduced as proofs of it; and some discrimination and knowledge of the subject are necessary in fixing, amid the huge mass of evidence, upon the true *dieta probantia*, the real proof passages,—those which, after all the arts and appliances of Socinian criticism have been brought to bear upon them, can be really shown to have successfully resisted all their attempts, and to stand, after the most searching application of the principles of sound interpretation, as impregnable bulwarks of Christ's divinity,—as manifestly intended to teach us that He is indeed the true God, the mighty God, Jehovah of hosts. There is a considerable number of *such* passages both in the Old and the New Testaments. They must necessarily constitute the main strength of the case; and no man can consider himself thoroughly versant in this subject, until, after having surveyed the whole evidence commonly adduced in the discussion, he has made up his own mind, as the result of careful study and meditation, as to *what* the passages *are* which *of themselves* afford clear and conclusive proof of Christ's divinity,



as distinguished from those which are rather corroborative than probative; and has made himself familiar with those exegetical principles and materials, by the application of which the true meaning of *these* passages may be brought out and established, and all the common Socinian glosses and attempts at perverting or neutralizing them may be exposed.

Secondly, the full and complete evidence for Christ's divinity is brought out only by a survey of the *whole* of the scriptural materials which bear upon this subject. Socinians are in the habit of assailing each text singly and separately, and labour to convey the impression that they have succeeded conclusively in disposing of all the proofs one by one; while they usually strive to keep in the background, and to conceal from view, the evidence in its entirety and completeness. It is, of course, quite right and necessary that every Scripture text adduced should be subjected to a careful and deliberate examination, and that its real meaning and import should be correctly ascertained. It is also necessary, as we have explained under the last head, that we should be prepared, in maintaining our doctrine, with particular texts, which, taken singly and of themselves, afford conclusive proofs of the truth. But it is not right that the entire discussion should be restricted to the examination of particular texts, without this being accompanied and followed by a general survey of the whole evidence, taken complexly and in the mass. When the Socinians have only a single text to deal with, they can usually get up something more or less plausible to involve its meaning in obscurity or uncertainty; but when their denial of Christ's divinity is brought into contact with the full blaze of the *whole* word of God, as it bears upon this subject, it then appears in all its gross deformity and palpable falsehood. There is, perhaps, no more conclusive and satisfactory way of bringing out and establishing the divinity of Christ, than just to collect together, and to read over in combination, a considerable number of the passages of Scripture which speak of Him, and then to call on men to submit their understandings, honestly and unreservedly, to the fair impression of the views of Christ which are thus brought before them, and to put to themselves the simple question,—Is it possible that the Bible could really have been fitted and designed to be our rule of faith, if these statements about Christ, taken in combination, were not intended to teach us, and to constrain us to believe, that He is

the one true and supreme God, possessed of the divine nature, and of all divine perfections? A minute and careful examination of the precise import and bearing of scriptural statements, will bring out a great deal of evidence in support of Christ's divinity that is not very obvious at first sight,—will show that this great doctrine is interwoven with the whole texture of revelation, and that the more direct and palpable proof is corroborated by evidence, possessed, indeed, of different degrees of strength in the different portions of which it is composed, but all combining to place this great doctrine upon an immoveable foundation; but there is nothing better fitted to assure the mind, to impress the understanding and the heart, to satisfy us that we are not following a cunningly-devised fable, when we rely upon Him as an almighty Saviour, and confide in the *infinity* of His perfections, than just to peruse the plain statements of God's word regarding Him, and to submit our minds honestly and unreservedly to the impressions which they are manifestly fitted and intended to produce. We should take care, then, while giving a due measure of time and attention to the exact and critical investigation of the precise meaning of particular texts, to contemplate also the evidence of Christ's divinity in its fulness and completeness, that we may see the more clearly, and feel the more deeply, the whole of what God has revealed to us concerning His Son.

There is one other general observation which I wish to make in regard to the study of this subject. It will be found occasionally, in perusing works written in vindication of Christ's divinity, that some texts which are founded on by one author as proofs of the doctrine, are regarded by another as affording only a presumption of its truth, and perhaps by a third as having no bearing upon the question; and this fact suggests the consideration, that there are two different and opposite tendencies upon this subject, both of which ought to be guarded against. The one is, that of pertinacity in adhering to everything that has ever been adduced as a proof or argument, though it may not be able to stand a searching critical investigation; and the other is, that of undue facility in giving up, as inconclusive or irrelevant, arguments that really are possessed of some weight and relevancy. Both of these tendencies have been manifested by the defenders of the truth, and both of them operate injuriously. Some men seem to think that it is nothing less than treachery to the doctrine itself, to doubt the

validity of any arguments that have ever at any time been brought forward in support of it; while others, again, seem to think that they manifest a more than ordinary skill in biblical criticism, and a larger measure of candour and liberality, in abandoning some posts which Trinitarians have commonly defended. Of course no general rule can be laid down for the regulation of this subject; for the only rule applicable to the matter is, that every man is bound, by the most solemn obligations, to use the utmost impartiality, care, and diligence, to ascertain the true and correct meaning and import of everything contained in the word of God. It is enough to point out these tendencies and dangers, and exhort men to guard carefully against being misled or perverted by either of them; while they should judge charitably of those who may seem not to have escaped wholly uninjured by them, *provided* they have given no sufficient reason to doubt (for, in some instances, the second of these tendencies has been carried so far as to afford reasonable ground for suspicion on this point) that they are honest and cordial friends of the great doctrine itself. There is enough of scriptural evidence for the doctrine of the supreme divinity of our blessed Saviour,—evidence that has ever stood, and will ever stand, the most searching critical investigation,—to satisfy all its supporters that there is no temptation whatever to deviate from the strictest impartiality in the investigation of the meaning of scriptural statements,—no reason why they should pertinaciously contend for the validity of every atom of proof that has ever been adduced in support of it, or hesitate about abandoning any argument that cannot be shown to stand the test of a searching application of all the sound principles both of criticism and exegesis.

The doctrine of the divinity of Christ is a peculiarly interesting topic of investigation, both from the intrinsic importance of the subject and its intimate connection with the whole scheme of revealed truth, and from the way and manner in which the investigation has been, and, of course, must be, conducted. There is perhaps no doctrine of Scripture which has called forth a larger amount of discussion,—the whole evidence about which has been more thoroughly sifted; there is none which has been more vigorously and perseveringly attacked,—none which has been more triumphantly defended and more conclusively established. Viewed simply as a subject of theological discussion, apart from its practical importance, this doctrine perhaps presents fully as

much to interest and attract as any other that has been made a subject of controversy.

The evidence bearing upon it extends nearly over the whole Bible,—the Old Testament as well as the New; for a great deal of evidence has been produced from the Old Testament that the Messiah promised to the fathers was a possessor of the divine nature, of divine perfections and prerogatives, and fully entitled to have applied to Him the incommunicable name of Jehovah. A great deal of learning and ability have been brought to bear upon the discussion of this question, both in establishing the truth, and in labouring to undermine and overthrow it. All the resources of minute criticism have been applied to the subject, and to everything that seemed to bear upon it; materials of all different kinds, and from all various sources, have been heaped up in the investigation of it. The discussion thus presents a sort of compendium of the whole science and art of biblical criticism, in the widest sense of the word,—the settling of the true text, in some important passages, by an examination of various readings,—the philological investigation of the true meaning of a considerable number of important words,—the application of grammatical and exegetical principles and rules to a great number of phrases, clauses, and sentences. All this is comprehended in a full discussion of the subject of our Lord's proper divinity. And there is, perhaps, no one doctrine to the disproof or overthrow of which materials of these different kinds, and from these various sources, have been more skilfully and perseveringly applied,—none in regard to which, by a better, and sounder, and more effective application of the same materials, a more certain and decisive victory has been gained for the cause of truth. Every point has been contested, and contested with some skill and vigour; but this has only made the establishment of the truth, in the ultimate result, the more palpable and the more undoubted.

For these reasons I have always been inclined to think, in opposition to some views put forth by Dr Chalmers,\* that it is very desirable that a pretty full investigation of the subject of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ should come in at an early period in the study of the system of Christian theology. The study of this subject leads to the consideration and application of many

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\* Preface to his Collected Works, vol. i., pp. iv., etc. (Edrs.)



important principles, both of a more general and comprehensive, and of a more minute and special kind, intimately connected with the investigation of divine truth, and the critical interpretation of the sacred Scriptures, and is thus fitted to teach important lessons that bear upon the whole field of theological discussion. To the humble and honest reader of God's word, the divinity of the Saviour seems to be very plainly and fully taught there; and when men are first brought into contact with Socinian perversions, they are apt, if they have not previously studied the subject critically, to be startled with the plausibility attaching to some of their attempts to involve the evidences of the doctrine, or at least the precise meaning of some particular passages of Scripture, in doubt and uncertainty. On this account, it is all the more satisfactory in itself, and all the better fitted to suggest useful lessons of general application, to find, as the result of a more thorough and searching investigation, and of the most stringent application of the recognised rules of critical inquiry, that our first and most natural impressions of the meaning and import of scriptural statements are fully confirmed and conclusively established,—that the criticism, the learning, and the ingenuity of opponents are met and overborne, on the part of the advocates of the truth, by all these qualities in a much superior degree,—and thus to be brought deliberately and rationally to the conclusion, that what has been in all ages the faith of the humbly devout, though not learned and critical, readers of God's word, is indeed its true meaning, and can be satisfactorily established in all its parts by the highest learning, and the most accomplished and searching criticism.

One leading consideration that ought to be kept in view in the investigation of the scriptural evidence bearing on this subject is this,—that the object to be aimed at is to find out, from an examination of the *whole word* of God, what it is that He wished and intended us to believe regarding it. The Scriptures are manifestly not constructed upon the principle of giving us, in formal, general statements, or in single passages, the substance of what they are designed to teach us upon any particular topic. It was manifestly God's design, in the construction of His word, that men, in using it for the purpose which it was intended to serve, should be called upon to exercise diligence and research in collecting and combining the scattered rays of light, possessed of

different degrees of intensity, that bear upon any particular point, and in estimating from the combination of the whole the real character, complexion, and position of the object presented. This consideration is fitted to impress upon our minds the unreasonableness and unfairness of selecting a few particular statements,—laying *them* down as a basis or foundation,—and then setting ourselves to pervert or explain away all other statements which, at first view, it may not seem very easy to reconcile with those we may have thought proper to select as our favourites, in place of investigating *all* fairly and impartially,—ascertaining the combined result of all that the Bible has stated or indicated upon the subject,—and then dealing with this result in one or other of the only two ways which can be regarded as in any sense *rational* in such a case, namely, either submitting implicitly to the doctrine as revealed by God, or else rejecting wholly the revelation which contains it.

In accordance with this view, it is proper to give prominence to this general consideration, which ought ever to be remembered and applied,—namely, that Socinian and Arian doctrines, in regard to the Trinity and the person of Christ, are founded only upon a partial selection of scriptural statements, to the neglect and disregard, or rather, what is much worse, to the perversion and distortion, of many others; while the orthodox doctrine exhibits accurately and fully the combined result of all, giving to every class of scriptural statements its true and fair meaning and its right place; and by this very quality or circumstance is proved to be the true key for interpreting Scripture, and solving all the difficulties that may occur in the investigation of its various statements. That Jesus Christ is a man, a true and real man,—that He had a true body, and a reasonable or rational soul,—is a doctrine clearly taught in Scripture, because it is manifestly implied in, and absolutely indispensable to, a fair and honest interpretation of many of its statements; and it is accordingly held by all who call themselves Christians, by Trinitarians as well as by Socinians and Arians. But there are also passages which, when fairly interpreted, afford satisfactory evidence that Jesus Christ existed, and was in heaven, before He was born at Bethlehem, and before the creation of the world; and that in this state of pre-existence He possessed a superhuman nature,—a nature higher and more exalted than that in which He presented Him-

self to men while upon earth. Now, all such statements the Socinians refuse to take into account, in forming their conceptions, or in settling their general doctrines about Christ; and they labour to vindicate their conduct in doing so, by exerting their utmost ingenuity in distorting and perverting their meaning, in order to make out some plausible grounds for alleging that they convey no such ideas as have been commonly deduced from them, and as they seem very evidently fitted to convey.

The Arians agree with us in holding, in opposition to the Socinians, that those passages *do* prove the pre-existence and superhuman dignity of Christ; and accordingly they admit these additional ideas,—additional, I mean, to that of His mere humanity,—into their doctrine concerning Him. But here they stop; and this is stopping short,—far short,—of the whole of what Scripture teaches us regarding Him, for it still leaves Him in the class of creatures. And we assert, and undertake to prove, that, in addition to those passages which prove His pre-existence and superhuman dignity,—and which, perhaps, taken by themselves, prove nothing more,—there are many passages which cannot be fairly and impartially investigated according to the strictest principles of criticism, without constraining men to believe that they were intended to represent to us Christ as possessed of true and proper divinity,—a possessor of the one divine nature, with all divine perfections and prerogatives. Of course, upon this ground, we insist that the Arian account of Christ, though fuller and more accurate than the Socinian, is yet fundamentally defective; and we maintain that, in order to express and embody the substance of *all* that Scripture teaches us concerning Him, we must hold that He existed not merely before the creation of the world, but from eternity,—not only in the possession of a superhuman, but of the one properly divine nature. This doctrine, and this alone, comes up to the full import of what is taught or indicated in Scripture concerning Him. When any part of it is left out or denied, then there are some scriptural statements,—more or less few, of course, according to the extent of the omission or negation,—to which torture must be applied, in order to show that they do not express the ideas which they seem plainly fitted and intended to convey; whereas, when this great doctrine is admitted in all its extent, the whole demands of Scripture are satisfied,—no distortion or perversion is required,—and there is the full satisfaction of having investi-

gated fairly and honestly everything that God has said to us upon the subject, and of having implicitly submitted our understandings to His authority. What a mass of confusion and inconsistency the Bible presents,—how thoroughly unfitted is it to be the standard or directory of our faith,—if it be indeed true that Christ was a mere man, and that the Bible was *intended* to teach us this; whereas, if we admit and apply the orthodox doctrine that He was God and man in one person, then order and consistency at once appear,—difficulties are solved, otherwise insoluble,—apparent contradictions are removed,—and the whole body of the scriptural statements concerning Him are seen to be in entire harmony with each other, and to concur, all without force or straining, in forming one consistent and harmonious whole.

The same general consideration may be applied to other points comprehended in the doctrine commonly received upon this subject. Take, for instance, the personality of the Holy Spirit. It cannot be disputed that there are passages of Scripture which speak of the Spirit of God, and which contain, taken by themselves, no sufficient evidence of distinct personality. But if men rest here, and upon this ground deny that the Spirit is a distinct person in the Godhead, then they are refusing to take into account, and to receive in their fair and legitimate import, other passages in which the idea of distinct personality is clearly indicated, and which cannot, without great and unwarrantable straining, be interpreted so as to exclude or omit it. The same principle applies to the denial of Christ's eternal Sonship by those who admit His true and proper divinity. By admitting His true and proper divinity, they interpret rightly a large number of the scriptural statements regarding Him, which Socinians and Arians distort and pervert; and they receive what must be admitted to be most essential and fundamental truth in the scriptural views of Christ. But still, as we believe, they come short of what Scripture teaches concerning Him, by refusing to admit that, even as God, He is the Son of the Father,—that there existed from eternity a relation between the first and second persons of the Godhead, analogous, in some respects, to that subsisting between a father and a son among men; and we are persuaded that there are passages in Scripture to which a considerable amount of straining must be applied in order to exclude this idea.

The Scripture, however, was evidently constructed upon the



principle not only of requiring, and *thereby testing*, men's diligence and impartiality in collecting and examining, in taking into account and applying, the *whole* of the materials which it furnishes, for regulating our judgment upon any particular point; but likewise upon the principle of requiring, and thereby testing, their real candour and love of truth, by providing only reasonable and satisfactory, and not overwhelming, evidence of the doctrines it was designed to teach. The peculiar doctrines of Christianity are not set forth in Scripture in such a way as to constrain the immediate assent of all who read its words, and are, in some sense, capable of understanding them; they are not there set forth in such a way as at once to preclude all difference of opinion and all cavilling, or to bid defiance to all attempts at distorting and perverting its statements. In short, startling as the position may at first sight appear, there is not one of the peculiar doctrines of the Christian system which is set forth in Scripture with such an amount of explicitness, and with such overwhelming evidence, as it was abstractly possible to have given to the statement and the proof of it, or in such a way as to deprive men, who are averse to the reception of its doctrines, of all plausible pretences for explaining away and perverting its statements, even while admitting their divine authority. No sane man ever doubted that the Nicene Creed and the Westminster Confession teach, and were intended to teach, by those who framed them, the true and proper divinity of the Son. But many men, to whom we cannot deny the possession of mental sanity, while we cannot but regard them as labouring under some ruinously perverting influences, have denied that the Scripture teaches this doctrine; they have argued strenuously in support of this denial, and have been able to produce some considerations in favour of their views, which are not altogether destitute of plausibility.

The explanation of this is, that Scripture was constructed upon the principle of testing our candour and love of truth, by leaving some opening for men who had little or no candour or love of truth rejecting the doctrines it was designed to teach, without either formally denying its authority, or openly renouncing all claim to sense or rationality, by advocating views in support of which nothing that was possessed even of plausibility could be alleged. The doctrine of the divinity of the Son, in common with all the other peculiar doctrines of the

Christian system, is set forth in Scripture with a force of evidence amply sufficient to satisfy every candid man,—every man who really desires to know the truth, to know what God has revealed regarding it,—with such evidence as that the rejection of it, of itself proves the existence and operation of a sinful state of mind, of a hatred of truth, and imposes a fearful responsibility; but not with such evidence as at once to secure and compel the assent of all who look at it, and to cut off the possibility of the assignation of some plausible grounds for rejecting it when men are led, by their dislike of the doctrine, and what it implies, to reject it. God is fully warranted in requiring us to believe whatever He has revealed, and accompanied with sufficient evidence of its truth, and to punish us for refusing our assent in these circumstances; and it is in accordance with the general principles of His moral administration, to test or try men by giving them evidence of what He wishes and requires them to believe, that is amply sufficient, without being necessarily overwhelming,—that shall certainly satisfy all who examine it with candour and a real desire to know the truth,—and that *may* leave in ignorance and error those who do not bring these qualities to the investigation.

The Socinians would demand for the proof of Christ's divinity a kind and amount of evidence that is altogether unreasonable. We formerly had occasion, in considering the general principles on which Socinians proceed in the interpretation of Scripture, to expose the unreasonableness of their demand, that we must show that the scriptural statements which we produce in support of our doctrines, not only *may*, but *must*, bear the meaning we ascribe to them, and cannot possibly admit of any other. We acknowledge, indeed, that it is not enough for us to show that Scripture statements *may* bear the meaning we attach to them; and we contend that there are statements about Christ of which it might be fairly said that they *must* bear our sense, and cannot possibly—that is, consistently with the principles of sound criticism and the dictates of common sense—admit of any other. But we do not acknowledge that the establishment of this second position is indispensable to making out our case, for there is a medium between the two extremes,—of proving merely, on the one hand, that certain statements may possibly admit of the meaning we ascribe to them; and, on the other hand, proving that they cannot possibly admit

of any other meaning. This intermediate position is this,—that upon a fair examination of the statements, and an impartial application to them of the recognised principles and rules of interpretation, we have sufficient materials for satisfying ourselves, and for convincing others, that *this*, and not anything different from it, *is* their true meaning,—the meaning which it is right and proper, if we would act uprightly and impartially, to ascribe to them. This is enough. This should satisfy reasonable and candid men. This fully warrants us to maintain, as it affords us sufficient materials to prove, that this is the meaning which they were *intended* to bear,—that these are the ideas which they were *intended* to convey to us. It must of course be assumed, in all such investigations, that the one object to be aimed at is to ascertain the true meaning of Scripture,—the meaning which the words bear, and were intended to bear. When this is once ascertained, we have what we are bound to regard as the doctrine which the author of Scripture *wished, intended, and expected* us to adopt upon His authority. It must further be assumed that the words were intended to convey to us the meaning which they are *fitted* to convey; so that the inquiry is virtually limited to this, What is the meaning which these words, in themselves, and in their connection, *are fitted* to convey to us, when fairly and impartially investigated by the recognised rules of philology, grammar, and criticism, as they apply to this matter?

The results brought out in this way we are bound to receive as exhibiting the true, real, and intended meaning of Scripture, and to deal with them accordingly. Cases may occur in which we may not be able to reach any very certain conclusion as to the true meaning of a particular statement,—in which, of several senses that may be suggested, we may, after examining the matter, be at a loss to decide which is the true meaning,—that is, we may not be able to attain to more than probability upon the point. There are such statements in Scripture, and of course they must be dealt with honestly, according to their true character, and the real evidence of the case, as it fairly applies to them. But these statements are very few, and *comparatively* unimportant. We can, in general, in the fair, diligent, and persevering use of appropriate materials, attain to a clear conviction as to what the true meaning of scriptural statements is,—what is the sense which they are fitted, and of course intended, to convey to us; and this we should

regard as settling the question, and satisfying our judgment, even though there may remain some ground for cavilling,—something not altogether destitute of plausibility that might be alleged in favour of the *possibility* of their bearing a different sense. In regard to the Trinity and the divinity of Christ, the evidence is full, complete, and conclusive, that the Scriptures are fitted to teach us these doctrines,—to convey to us, to impress upon us, the ideas that constitute them; and, of course, that the Author of the Scriptures intended and expected, nay, demands at our peril, that we shall believe upon His authority, that “in the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity,—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; and that God the Son became man.”

We conclude with a few remarks upon the importance of this doctrine, and the responsibility connected with the admission or denial of it. When we reflect upon the fulness and clearness with which the divinity of Christ—which, as we formerly explained, may be said practically to carry with it the whole doctrine of the Trinity—is revealed to us in Scripture, we cannot regard those who refuse to receive it in any other light than as men who have determined that they will not submit *their* understandings to the revelation which God has given us. They are refusing to receive the record which He has given us concerning Himself and concerning His Son, in its substance and fundamental features; and they are doing so under the influence of motives and tendencies which manifestly imply determined rebellion against God’s authority, and which would effectually lead them to reject any revelation He might give that did not harmonize with their fancies and inclinations. It is evident from the nature of the case, and from the statements of Scripture, that the doctrines of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ are of essential and fundamental importance in the Christian scheme. Whether we view the gospel theoretically, as a system of doctrines intended to enlighten our understandings in the knowledge of God and of divine things, or more practically, as intended to bear upon the formation of the character, and the regulation of the motives of men, the admission or denial of the doctrine of three distinct persons in the unity of the Godhead, and of the union of the divine and human natures in the one person of Christ, must evidently affect fundamentally its whole character and influence. To the second person in the



Godhead is assigned the work of satisfying divine justice, and of reconciling us to God; and to the third person is assigned the work of renewing our moral natures, and preparing us for the enjoyment of happiness. And God has made our enjoyment of the blessings of salvation dependent upon our knowing something of the nature of these blessings, and of the way and manner in which they have been procured and are bestowed.

If the Son and the Holy Ghost are not truly divine,—partakers of the one divine nature,—we are guilty of idolatry in bestowing upon them divine honours; and if they are divine, we are, in refusing to pay them divine honours, robbing God of what is due to Him, and of what He is demanding of us. Christ has Himself uttered this most solemn and impressive declaration, “that God hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that (in order that, or with a view to secure that) all men might honour the Son, even as they honour the Father;” where we are plainly enjoined to give the same honour to the Son as to the Father, and where the injunction is sanctioned by an express assertion of the certainty of its bearing upon the proceedings of the day of judgment, and the decision then to be pronounced upon our eternal destinies. What, indeed, is Christianity, without a divine Saviour? In what essential respect does it differ, if Christ was a mere man, or even a creature, from Mahommedanism, or from the mere light of nature? How can two systems of doctrine, or two provisions for accomplishing any moral object, have the same influence and result, which are, and must be, so different, so opposite, in their fundamental views and arrangements, as the doctrines maintained by the advocates and opponents of Christ’s proper Godhead. Accordingly, it has held universally, that according as men admitted or denied the divinity of Christ, have their whole notions about the gospel method of salvation been affected. On the divinity of Christ are evidently suspended the doctrine of atonement, or satisfaction for sin, and the whole method of justification; in short, everything that bears most vitally upon men’s eternal welfare. Our Saviour Himself has expressly declared, “It is eternal life to know Thee (addressing His Father), the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent,”\*—a statement which does not prove, as anti-Trinitarians allege, that the Father is the only true

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\* John xvii. 3.

God, to the exclusion of the Son, because this is not *necessarily* involved in it, and because to interpret it in this way would make Scripture contradict itself, as in another passage it expressly calls Jesus Christ the true God and eternal life,\* and affords us most abundant materials for believing that He is so; but which *does prove* that a knowledge of Jesus Christ must consist in the perception, the maintenance, and the application of the *real* views regarding Him, which are actually taught in the sacred Scriptures,—in knowing Him *as* He is there revealed,—and in cherishing towards Him all those feelings, and discharging towards Him all those duties, which the scriptural representations of His nature and person are fitted to produce or to impose. This is eternal life; and the men who, having in their hands the record which God has given concerning His Son, refuse to honour Him, even as they honour the Father,—to pay Him divine honour, as being a possessor of the divine nature,—and to confide in Him, as a divine and almighty Saviour,—must be regarded as judging themselves unworthy of this eternal life, as deliberately casting it away from them.

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\* 1 John v. 20.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT.

THE incarnation of the second person of the Godhead,—the assumption of human nature by One who from eternity had possessed the divine nature, so that He was God and man in one person,—is, as a subject of contemplation, well fitted to call forth the profoundest reverence, and to excite the strongest emotions; and if it was indeed a reality, must have been intended to accomplish most important results. If Christ really was God and man in one person, we may expect to find, in the object thus presented to our contemplation, much that is mysterious—much that we cannot fully comprehend; while we should also be stirred up to examine with the utmost care everything that has been revealed to us regarding it, assured that it must possess no ordinary interest and importance. He who is represented to us in Scripture as being God and man in one person, is also described as the only Mediator between God and man—as the only Saviour of sinners. If it be indeed true, as the Scripture plainly teaches, that the divine and human natures were united in His one person, it is undeniable that this union must have been formed in order to the salvation of sinners, and that the plan which God devised and executed for saving sinners, must just consist in, or be based upon, what Christ, as God and man in one person, *did*, in order to effect this object. This was the work which the Father gave Him to do; and by doing it He has secured the deliverance from everlasting misery, and the eternal blessedness, of as many as the Father has given Him,—“an innumerable company, which no man can number, out of every kindred, and nation, and people, and tongue.”

#### *Sec. I.—Connection between the Person and Work of Christ.*

In systematic expositions of the scheme of divine truth, the subject of the person of the Mediator, or the scriptural account

of who and what Christ was, is usually followed by the subject of the work of Christ, or the account of what He did for the salvation of sinners. The terms commonly employed by theologians to describe in general the work of Christ as Mediator, are *munus* and *officium*; and divines of almost all classes have admitted, that the leading features of the scriptural representations of what Christ did for the salvation of sinners, might be fully brought out, by ascribing to Him the three offices of a Prophet, a Priest, and a King, and by unfolding what it was He did in the execution of these three offices.

It is plain, from the nature of the case, that the subjects of the person and the work of Christ must be, in fact and in doctrine, intimately connected with each other. If the Mediator was God and man in one person, then we might confidently expect that He would do, and that it would be necessary for Him to do, in order to the salvation of sinners, what no man, what no creature, was competent to do. And when we survey what Scripture seems to hold up to us as the work which He wrought for our salvation, we can scarcely fail to be impressed with the conviction, that, from its very nature, it required one who was possessed of infinite perfection and excellence to accomplish it. Accordingly, we find that the admission or denial of Christ's divinity has always affected fundamentally the whole of men's views in regard to almost everything in the scheme of salvation, and especially in regard to Christ's mediatorial work.

Socinians, holding that Christ was a mere man, teach, in perfect consistency with this, that He did nothing for the salvation of men except what may be comprehended under the general head or description of revealing, confirming, and illustrating truth or doctrine, and of setting us an example,—a work to which any creature, even a mere man, of course employed and qualified by God for the purpose, was perfectly competent. Arians,—holding Christ to be a superhuman, but still a created, and not a divine or infinite being,—are accustomed, in accordance with this view of the person of the Mediator, to introduce an additional and somewhat higher notion into their representation of the nature of His work. It is, in substance, that of *influence* exerted by Him with God, in order to prevail upon Him to pardon sinners and admit them into the enjoyment of His favour. Christ, as a highly exalted creature, who took a deep interest in the salvation of



sinners, and was willing to endure, and did endure, humiliation and suffering on their account, did what was very meritorious in itself and very acceptable to God; and thus acquired such influence with God, as that He consented, at Christ's request, and from a regard to Him, and to what He had done, to forgive sinners, and to bestow upon them spiritual blessings. This is, in substance, the view entertained of the general nature of Christ's work by those who regard Him as an exalted, superangelic creature; and I fear that a vague impression of something similar to this, and not going much beyond it, floats in the minds of many amongst us, who have never thought or speculated on religious subjects. Almost all who have held the doctrine of Christ's proper divinity, have also believed that His sufferings and death were vicarious,—that is, that they were endured in the room and stead of sinners,—and have regarded the most important, peculiar, and essential features of His mediatorial work to be His substitution in our room and stead,—the satisfaction which He rendered to divine justice,—though it must be admitted, that there have been differences of opinion, of no small importance, among those who have concurred in maintaining these general scriptural truths with respect both to the person and the work of Christ.\*

There is a manifest enough congruity between the three distinctive schemes of doctrine, as to the person of the Mediator, and the corresponding opinions with respect to His work; and there would, of course, be nothing strange in this, if the whole subject were one of mere intellectual speculation, in regard to which men were warranted and called upon to follow out their own views to all their legitimate logical results. But since all parties profess to derive their views upon this subject from the statements of Scripture, exactly and critically interpreted, it is somewhat singular that they should all *find in Scripture* a line of different opinions in regard to Christ's work running parallel to a corresponding series in regard to His person. The fact affords too good reasons for the conclusion, that it is very common for men, even when professing to be simply investigating the meaning of scriptural statements, to be greatly, if not chiefly, influenced by certain previous notions of a general kind, which, whether

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\* See, at the end of this chapter, | General Assembly of the Free Church,  
extract from Sermon delivered by Dr | 17th May 1860.  
Cunningham, at the opening of the |

upon good grounds or not, they have been led to form, as to what Scripture does say, or should say; and is thus fitted to impress upon us the important lesson, that if we would escape the guilt of distorting and perverting the whole word of God, and of misunderstanding the whole scheme of salvation, we must be very careful to derive all our views, upon matters of religious doctrine, *from* the sacred Scripture, in place of getting them from some other source, and then bringing them *to* it, and virtually employing them, more or less openly and palpably, to overrule its authority, and to pervert its meaning.

I have said that it has been the general practice of theologians since the Reformation, to expound the scriptural doctrine concerning the work of Christ as Mediator, in the way of ascribing to Him the three distinct offices of a Prophet, a Priest, and a King; and then classifying and illustrating, under these three heads, the different departments of the work which He wrought for the salvation of sinners. This division, if represented and applied as one which certainly comprehends and exhausts the subject, cannot be said to have *direct* scriptural authority; and yet there is enough in Scripture to suggest and warrant the adoption of it, as a useful and convenient arrangement, though nothing to warrant us in drawing inferences or conclusions from it, as if it were both accurate and complete. The ground or warrant for it is this:—that it is very easy to prove from Scripture that Christ, as Mediator, is a Prophet, a Priest, and a King; that He executed the functions of these three different offices; and that all the leading departments of His work,—of what He did for the salvation of sinners, as it is set before us in Scripture,—fall naturally and easily under the ordinary and appropriate functions of these different offices. The propriety and utility of this division have been a good deal discussed by some continental writers. Ernesti—who was, however, much more eminent as a critic than as a theologian—laboured to show, in a dissertation, “*De officio Christi triplici*,” published in his *Opuscula Theologica*,\* that the division has no sanction from Scripture, and is fitted only to introduce confusion and error; and his views and arguments have been adopted by Doederlein, Morus, and Knapp.† There is, however,

\* P. 371, ed. 1792.

† Doederlein, *Institutio Theologi Christiani*, § 305, Pars. ii., p. 507.

Knapp's *Lectures on Christian Theology*, pp. 334–336. *Vide* also Mori *Epitome*, p. 193.

very little force in their objections, and the division continues still to be generally adopted by the most eminent continental theologians of the present day. The leading point which the opponents of this division labour to establish is, that in Scripture the functions of these different offices are not *always* exactly discriminated from each other. But this position, even though proved, is very little to the purpose: for it can scarcely be disputed that Scripture does afford us sufficient materials for forming pretty definite conceptions of the respective natures and functions of these three offices, as distinct from each other; and that, in point of fact, the leading departments of Christ's work admit easily and naturally of being classed under the heads of the appropriate functions of these three offices, as the Scripture *ordinarily* discriminates them. This is quite sufficient to sanction the distinction as unobjectionable, useful, and convenient; while, of course, as it proves nothing of itself, all must admit the obligation lying upon those who make use of it to produce distinct and satisfactory scriptural proof of every position they maintain, as to the nature, object, and effects of anything that Christ is alleged to have done in the execution of these different offices.

It may be described in general, as the characteristic of the Socinian system of theology upon this subject, that it regards Christ merely as a Prophet,—that is, merely as revealing and establishing truths or doctrines concerning God and divine things,—while it denies that He executed the office of a Priest or of a King. But while this is true in *substance*, there are one or two explanations that may assist us in understanding the discussions which occur upon this subject among the older theologians. The original Socinians, as I have already had occasion to mention, usually admitted that Christ executed the office of a King, and they did not altogether, and in every sense, deny that He executed the office of a Priest; while they conjoined or confounded the priestly and the kingly offices. I then explained, that though very far from being deficient either in ingenuity or in courage, they were unable to evade the evidence that Christ, after His resurrection, was raised to a station of exalted power, which in some way or other He employed for promoting the spiritual and eternal welfare of men. Their leading position, in regard to Christ's priestly office, was, that He did not execute it at all upon earth, but only after His ascension to heaven; and that, of course, His sufferings and death formed

no part of it,—these being intended merely to afford us an example of virtue, and to confirm and establish the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. The execution of His priestly office did not commence till after His ascension, and was only an aspect or modification of the kingly office, or of the exercise of the powers with which He had been invested; while everything connected with the objects to which this power was directed, or the way and manner in which it was exercised, was left wholly unexplained. Modern Socinians, having discovered that Scripture gives us no definite information as to the place which Christ now occupies, and the manner in which He is now engaged; and being satisfied that all that is said in Scripture about His priesthood is wholly figurative,—and, moreover, that *the figure means nothing*, real or true, being taken from mere Jewish notions,—have altogether discarded both the priestly and the kingly offices, and have thus brought out somewhat more plainly and openly, what the old Socinians held in substance, though they conveyed it in a more scriptural phraseology.

It is under the head of the priestly office of Christ that the great and infinitely important subject of His satisfaction or atonement is discussed; and this may be regarded as the most peculiar and essential feature of the work which He wrought, as Mediator, for the salvation of sinners,—that which stands in most immediate and necessary connection with the divinity of His person. We can conceive it possible that God might have given us a very full revelation of His will, and abundantly confirmed the certainty of the information which He communicated, as well as have set before us a complete pattern of every virtue for our imitation, *through the instrumentality of a creature, or even of a mere man*. We can conceive a creature exalted by God to a very high pitch of power and dignity, and made the instrument, in the exercise of this power, of accomplishing very important results bearing upon the spiritual and eternal welfare of men. But when the ideas of satisfying the divine justice and the divine law, in the room and stead of sinners,—and *thereby* reconciling men to God, whose law they had broken,—are presented to our minds, and in some measure realized, here we cannot but be impressed with the conviction, that if these ideas describe actual realities, we have got into a region in which there is no scope for the agency or operation of a mere creature, and in which infinite power and perfection are called for. We are not, indeed, to imagine that we fully and rightly understand the pro-



phetical office of the Mediator, unless we regard the great Revealer of God as one who was the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person,—as having been from eternity in the bosom of the Father. And it is proper also to remember, that we can scarcely conceive it to be possible that the actual power and dominion which the Scriptures ascribe to Christ as Mediator, and which He is ever exercising in the execution of His kingly office,—including, as it does, the entire government of the universe, and the absolute disposal of the everlasting destinies of all men,—*could* be delegated to, and exercised by, any creature, however exalted. We only wish to remark, that the general ideas of revealing God's will, and exercising power or dominion,—which may be said to constitute the essence of the doctrine concerning the prophetic and kingly offices of Christ,—are more within the range of our ordinary conceptions; and that though, in point of fact, applicable to Christ in a way in which they could not apply to any creature, yet they do not of themselves suggest so readily the idea of *the necessity of a divine* Mediator as those which are commonly associated with the priestly office. The priestly office, accordingly, has been the principal subject of controversial discussion, both from its more immediate connection with the proper divinity of Christ's person, and from its more extensive and influential bearing upon all the provisions and arrangements of the scheme of salvation.

It is very manifest, on the most cursory survey of the sacred Scriptures, that the salvation of sinners is ascribed to the sufferings and death of Christ,—that His sufferings and death are represented as intimately connected with, and influentially bearing upon, this infinitely important result. Indeed, the whole subject which is now under consideration may be regarded, in one aspect of it, as virtually resolving into the investigation of this question,—What is the relation subsisting between the sufferings and death of Christ and the salvation of sinners? In what precise way do they bear upon men's obtaining or receiving the forgiveness of their sins and the enjoyment of God's favour? And in further considering this subject, it will be convenient, for the sake both of distinctness and brevity, to advert only to the *death* of Christ; for though most of the advocates of the generally received doctrine of the atonement regard the whole of Christ's humiliation and sufferings, from His incarnation to His crucifixion, as invested with a priestly, sacrificial, and piacular character,—as constituting His

once offering up of Himself a sacrifice,—as *all propitiatory* of God, and *expiatory* of men's sins,—yet, in accordance with the general representations of Scripture, they regard His oblation or sacrifice of Himself, as a peculiar victim, as principally manifested, and as concentrated in His pouring out His soul unto death,—His bearing our sins in His own body on the tree. And we may also, for the same reasons,—and because we do not intend at present to discuss the whole subject of justification, and the bearing of Christ's work upon all that is implied in that word,—speak generally, and in the first instance, in adverting to the object to be effected, of the pardon or forgiveness of men's sins,—an expression *sometimes* used in Scripture as virtually including or implying the whole of our salvation, because it is a fundamental part of it, and because it may be justly regarded as, in some respects, the primary thing to be attended to in considering our relation to God and our everlasting destinies.

We have already stated generally the different doctrines or theories which have been propounded,—all professing to rest upon scriptural authority,—in regard to the connection between the death of Christ and the forgiveness of men's sins, taking these two expressions in the sense now explained. The Socinian doctrine\* is, that the death of Christ bears upon this result merely by confirming and illustrating truths, and by setting an example of virtue; and thus affording motives and encouragements to the exercise of repentance and the performance of good actions, by which we ourselves procure or obtain for ourselves the forgiveness of sin and the enjoyment of God's favour,—its whole power and efficacy being thus placed in the confirmation of truth and in the exhibition of exemplary virtue. The doctrine commonly held by Arians is, that Christ, by submitting to suffering and to death, on men's account, and with a view to their benefit, has done what was very acceptable to God, and has thus obtained a position of influence with God, which He exercises by interceding in some way or other for the purpose of procuring for men forgiveness and favour. Now, it may be said to be true, that the Scripture does ascribe these effects to the death of Christ, and that, of course, that event is fitted, and was intended, to produce them. The death of Christ was a testimony to truths, and is well adapted to establish and

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\* See summary of the Socinian doctrine given in Grotius, *De Satisfactione*, | c. viii., p. 168, and c. x., p. 206; c. i., pp. 40-44. Ed. 1661.

illustrate them, though *what* these truths *are* must depend essentially upon what that event *was* in its whole character and bearing. It is fitted, and of course was intended, to afford us motives and encouragements to repentance and holiness. This is true, but it is very far from being the whole of the truth upon the subject. It is likewise true that Scripture sanctions the general idea of Christ—by suffering and dying for the sake of men—doing what was pleasing and acceptable to God,—of His being in consequence rewarded, and raised to a position of high power and dignity,—and of His interceding with God, or using influence with Him, to procure for men spiritual blessings. All this is true, and it is held by those who maintain the commonly received doctrine of the atonement. But neither is this the whole of the truth which Scripture teaches upon the subject. And what in it is true, as thus generally expressed, is not brought out so fully and explicitly, as the Scripture affords us ample materials for doing, by connecting it with the doctrine of the atonement.

Some men would fain persuade us that the substance of all that Scripture teaches us concerning the way of salvation is this,—that an exalted and glorious Being interposed on behalf of sinners,—mediated between them and an offended God; and by this interposition and influence procured for them the forgiveness of their sins, and the enjoyment of God's favour. Now, all this is true. There is nothing in this general statement which contradicts or opposes anything that is taught us in Scripture. But, just as the Scripture affords us, as we have seen, abundant materials for defining much more fully and explicitly the real nature, dignity, and position of this exalted Being, and leaves us not to mere vague generalities upon this point, but warrants and requires us to believe and maintain that He was of the same nature and substance with the Father, and equal in power and glory; so, in like manner, in regard to what He *did* for men's salvation, the Scripture does not leave us to the vague generalities of His mediating or interposing, interceding or using influence, on our behalf, but affords us abundant materials for explaining much more precisely and definitely the nature or kind of His mediation or interposition,—the foundation of His intercession,—the ground or source of His influence. The commonly received doctrine of the satisfaction or atonement of Christ just professes to bring out this more full and specific information; and the substance of it is this,—that *the*

*way and manner* in which He mediated or interposed in behalf of sinners, and in order to effect their deliverance or salvation, was by putting Himself in their place,—by substituting Himself in their room and stead,—suffering, as their *substitute or surety*, the penalty of the law which they had broken, the punishment which they had deserved by their sins,—and thereby satisfying the claims of divine justice, and thus reconciling them to God. This great scriptural doctrine is thus expressed in our Confession of Faith: \* “The Lord Jesus, by His perfect obedience and sacrifice of Himself, which He through the eternal Spirit once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the justice of His Father; and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father hath given unto Him;” or, in the words of the Shorter Catechism, “Christ executeth the office of a Priest, in His once offering up of Himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God; and in making continual intercession for us.”

Here I may remark, as illustrating some preceding observations,—though this is not a topic which I mean to dwell upon,—that His intercession succeeds, and is based upon, His sacrifice and satisfaction; and that thus distinctness and definiteness are given to the idea which it expresses. When men’s deliverance, or their possession of spiritual blessings, is ascribed, in general, to the intercession of Christ, without being accompanied with an exposition of His vicarious sacrifice and satisfaction, *as the ground or basis on which it rests*, no more definite meaning can be attached to it than merely that *of using some influence*, in order to procure for men what they need from God. But when His vicarious sacrifice and satisfaction are first asserted as the great leading department of the work which He wrought for the salvation of sinners, and His intercession is *then* introduced as following this, and based upon it, we escape from this vague generality, and are warranted and enabled to represent His intercession as implying that He pleads with God, in behalf of men, and in order to obtain for them the forgiveness of their sins, this most relevant and weighty consideration,—viz., that He has suffered in their room, that He has endured in their stead the whole penalty which their sins had deserved.

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\* C. viii., s. 5.



The great doctrine, that Christ offered Himself as a vicarious sacrifice,—that is, a sacrifice in the room and stead of sinners, as their surety and substitute; that He did so, in order to satisfy divine justice and reconcile them to God; and that, of course, by doing so, He has satisfied divine justice and reconciled them to God,—has been always held and maintained by the great body of the Christian church. It was not, indeed, like the doctrines of the Trinity and the person of Christ, subjected, at an early period in the history of the church, to a thorough and searching controversial discussion; and, in consequence of this, men's views in regard to it continued always to partake somewhat of the character of vagueness and indistinctness. It can scarcely be said to have been fully expounded and discussed, in such a way as to bring out thoroughly its true nature and its scriptural grounds, until after the publication of the works of Socinus; for Anselm's contributions to the right exposition of this doctrine, important as they are, scarcely come up to this description. It formed no part of the controversy between the Reformers and the Romanists; for the Church of Rome has always continued to profess the substance of scriptural truth on this subject, as well as on that of the Trinity, though, according to her usual practice, she has grievously corrupted, and almost wholly neutralized, the truth which she professedly holds. Socinus was the first who made a full and elaborate effort to overturn the doctrine which the church had always held upon this subject, and which, though not very fully or explicitly developed as a topic of speculation, had constituted the source at once of the hopes and the motives of God's people from the beginning. This he did chiefly in his Treatise, "De Jesu Christo Servatore," and in his "Prælectiones Theologicæ;" and it certainly required no ordinary ingenuity for one man, and without the benefit of much previous discussion upon the point, to devise a whole system of plausible evasions and perversions, for the purpose of showing that the doctrine which the whole church had hitherto believed upon the subject was not taught in Scripture. Ever since that period the doctrine of the atonement or satisfaction of Christ has been very fully discussed in all its bearings and aspects, affecting as it does, and must do, the whole scheme of Christian truth; and the result has been, that the Socinian evasions and perversions of Scripture have been triumphantly exposed, and that the generally received

doctrine of the church has been conclusively established, and placed upon an immovable basis, by the most exact and searching investigation, conducted upon the soundest and strictest critical principles into the meaning of the numerous and varied scriptural statements that bear upon this subject.

In considering this subject, I propose to advert, in the first place, to the doctrine of the atonement or satisfaction of Christ in general, as held by the universal church,—by Papists, Lutherans, Calvinists, and Arminians,—in opposition to the Socinians and other deniers of our Lord's divinity; in the second place, to the peculiarities of the Arminian doctrine upon this subject, as affected and determined by its relation to the general system of Arminian theology; and in the third place, to the doctrine which has been propounded, upon this subject, by those who profess Calvinistic principles upon other points, but who, upon *this*, hold views identical with, or closely resembling those of, the Arminians, especially in regard to the extent of the atonement.

### *Sec. II.—Necessity of the Atonement.*

In considering the subject of the atonement, it may be proper to advert, in the first place, to a topic which has given rise to a good deal of discussion,—namely, the *necessity* of an atonement or satisfaction, in order to the forgiveness of men's sins. The Socinians allege that a vicarious atonement or satisfaction for sin is altogether unnecessary, and adduce this consideration as a proof, or at least a presumption, against its truth or reality; while the advocates of an atonement have not been contented with showing that its non-necessity could not be proved, but have, in general, further averred positively that it was necessary,—have undertaken to prove this,—and have made the evidence of its necessity at once an argument in favour of its truth and reality, and a means of illustrating its real nature and operation. The assertion, as well as the denial, of the necessity of an atonement, must, from the nature of the case, be based upon certain ideas of the attributes and moral government of God, viewed in connection with the actual state and condition of man as a transgressor of His law; and the subject thus leads to discussions in which there is a great danger of indulging in presumptuous speculations on points of which we *can* know nothing, except in so far as God has been

pleased to convey to us information in His word. It can scarcely be said that the Scripture gives us any *direct* or *explicit* information upon the precise question, whether or not the salvation of sinners could possibly have been effected in any other way than through an atonement or satisfaction; and it is not *indispensable* for any important purpose that this question should be determined. The only point of vital importance is that of the *truth or reality* of an atonement, and then the consideration of its true nature and bearing. We have just to ascertain from Scripture what was the true character and object of Christ's death, and the way and manner in which, in point of fact, it bears upon the forgiveness of men's sins, and their relation to God and to His law; and when we have ascertained this, it cannot be of fundamental importance that we should investigate and determine the question, whether or not it was *possible* for God to have forgiven men without satisfaction.

Had the materials for determining the question of the truth and reality of an atonement been scanty or obscure, then the presumption arising from anything we might be able to know or ascertain as to its necessity or non-necessity, might be of some avail in turning the scale upon the question of its truth or reality. But when we have in Scripture such explicit and abundant materials for establishing the great doctrine that, in point of fact, Christ did offer up Himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, we are entitled to feel, and we ought to feel, that, in stating and arguing this question, we are wholly independent of the alleged necessity or non-necessity of an atonement; and having ascertained what God *has* done,—what provision He *has* made,—what scheme He *has* adopted,—we need not be very anxious about settling the question, whether or not He *could* have accomplished the result in any other way or by any other means. But while it is proper that we should understand that this question about the necessity of an atonement is not one of *vital* importance in defending our cause against the Socinians, as we have full and abundant evidence of its truth and reality; yet, since the subject has been largely discussed among theologians,—since almost all who have held the truth and reality of an atonement have also maintained its necessity,—and since the consideration of the subject brings out some views *which, though not indispensable to the proof of its truth or reality, are yet true and important in themselves, and very useful in illustrating its nature and bearings,*—it may be proper to

give a brief notice of the points that are usually introduced into the discussion of this question.

Let us first advert to the ground taken by the Socinians upon this department of the subject. They deny the necessity of an atonement or satisfaction for sin, upon the ground that the essential benevolence and compassion of God must have prompted, and that His supreme dominion must have enabled, Him to forgive men's sins without any atonement or satisfaction; and that there was nothing in His nature, government, or law, which threw any obstacle in the way of His at once exercising His sovereign dominion in accordance with the promptings of His compassion, and extending forgiveness to all upon the condition of repentance and reformation.

Now, in the first place, an allegation of this sort is sufficiently met by the scriptural proof, that, in point of fact, an atonement *was* offered,—that satisfaction was made, and that forgiveness and salvation are held out to men, and bestowed upon them, only on the footing of this atonement. And then, in the second place, if we should, *ex abundantia*, examine the Socinian position more directly, it is no difficult matter to show that they have not proved, and cannot prove, any one of the positions on which they rest the alleged non-necessity of an atonement. As they commonly allege that the doctrine of the Trinity is a denial of the divine unity, so they usually maintain that the doctrine of the atonement involves a denial of the divine placability.\* That placability is an attribute or quality of God, is unquestionable. This general position can be fully established from revelation, however doubtful or uncertain may be the proof of it derived from reason or nature. Independently altogether of general scriptural declarations, it is established by the facts, that, as all admit, God desired and determined to forgive and to save sinners who had broken His law, and made provision for carrying this gracious purpose into effect. But there is no particular statement in Scripture, and no general principle clearly sanctioned by it, which warrants us to assert that God's placability required of Him that He should forgive men's sins *without an atonement*, and upon the mere condition of repentance. Placability is not the only attribute or quality of God.

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\* Priestley's History of the Corruptions of Christianity, P. ii., Introd., vol. i., p. 146.



There are other features of His character, established both by His works and His word, which, viewed by themselves, are manifestly fitted to lead us to draw an opposite conclusion as to the way in which He would, in point of fact, deal with sin and sinners,—well fitted to excite the apprehension that He will inflict upon them the punishment which, by their sins, they have merited. In these circumstances, it is utterly unwarrantable for us, without clear authority from Scripture, to indulge in dogmatic assertions as to what God certainly will, or will not, do in certain circumstances.

Neither Scripture nor reason warrant the position that repentance is, in its own nature, an adequate reason or ground, ordinarily and in general, and still less in all cases, for pardoning those who have transgressed a law to which they were subject. It is in entire accordance with the dictates of reason, and with the ordinary practice of men, to inflict the full penalty of the law upon repentant criminals; and there is no ground on which we are warranted to assert that God cannot, or certainly will not, follow a similar course in regard to those who have transgressed His law. The Socinians are accustomed, in discussing this point, to dwell upon the scriptural statements with respect to repentance, its necessity and importance, and the connection subsisting between it and forgiveness. But there is nothing in these statements which establishes the position they undertake to maintain upon this subject. Those statements prove, indeed, that sinners are under an imperative obligation to repent; and they prove further, that, according to the arrangements which God has actually made, an invariable connection subsists between forgiveness and repentance, so that it is true that without repentance there is no forgiveness, and that wherever there is real repentance, forgiveness is bestowed; and that thus men are commanded and bound to repent in order to their being forgiven, and are warranted to infer their forgiveness from their repentance. The scriptural statements prove all this, but they prove nothing more; and this is not enough to give support to the Socinian argument. All this may be true, while it may still be false that repentance is the sole cause or condition of the forgiveness,—the sole, or even the principal, reason on account of which it is bestowed; *and if so*, then there is abundant room left for the admission of the principle, that a vicarious atonement or satisfaction was also necessary in order to the forgiveness of

sin, and was indeed the true ground on which the forgiveness was conferred.

But while it is thus shown that this may be true, in entire consistency with all that Scripture says about forgiveness, and the connection between it and repentance, and while this is amply sufficient to refute the Socinian argument; we undertake further to prove from Scripture, that the atonement or satisfaction of Christ is indeed the ground on which forgiveness rests, and that this principle must be taken in, and must have its proper place assigned to it, if we would receive and maintain the *whole* doctrine which the word of God plainly teaches us in regard to this most momentous subject. But, more than this, the advocates of the generally received doctrine of the atonement not only deny and disprove the Socinian allegation of its non-necessity,—not only show that Socinians cannot prove that it was not necessary,—they themselves, in general, positively aver that it was necessary, and think they can produce satisfactory evidence of the truth of this position. There is, at first view, something repulsive—as having the appearance of unwarranted presumption—in asserting the necessity of an atonement or satisfaction, as it really amounts in substance to this, that God *could not* have pardoned men unless an atonement had been made,—unless a satisfaction had been rendered for their sins; and it may appear more suited to the modesty and reverence with which we ought to speak on such a subject, to say, that, for aught we know, God *might* have saved men in other ways, or through other means, but that He has adopted that method or scheme which was the wisest and the best,—best fitted to promote His own glory, and secure the great ends of His moral government. We find, however, upon further consideration, that the case is altogether so peculiar, and that the grounds of the assertion are so clear and strong, as to warrant it, even though an *explicit* deliverance upon this precise point is not given us in Scripture.

As to the general position, that an atonement or satisfaction was necessary,—or rather, that God could not have made provision for pardoning and saving sinners in any other way than that which He has actually adopted,—this seems fully warranted, independently of any other consideration, by the Scripture doctrine of the proper divinity of the Saviour. The incarnation of the eternal Son of God,—the assumption of human nature by One who was at the same time possessor of the divine,—the fact that *this* Being, who

is God and man in one person, spent a life on earth of obscurity and humiliation,—that He endured many sufferings and indignities, and was at last subjected to a cruel and ignominious death;—all this, if it be true,—if it be an actual reality,—as Scripture requires us to believe, is so peculiar and extraordinary in its whole character and aspects, that whenever we are led to realize it, we feel ourselves at once irresistibly constrained to say, that this would not have taken place if it had been possible that the result to which it was directed,—namely, the forgiveness and salvation of sinners,—could have been effected in any other way, or by any other means. We feel, and we cannot but feel, that there is no unwarranted presumption in saying, that if it had been possible that the salvation of guilty men could have been otherwise accomplished, the only-begotten Son of God would not have left the glory which He had with His Father from eternity, assumed human nature, and suffered and died on earth. This ground, were there nothing more revealed regarding it, would warrant us to make the general assertion, that the incarnation, suffering, and death of Christ were necessary to the salvation of sinners,—that this result could not have been effected without them. This consideration, indeed, has no weight with Socinians, as they do not admit the grand peculiarity on which it is based,—namely, the divinity and the incarnation of Him who came to save sinners. Still it is an ample warrant for our general assertion, as being clearly implied in, and certainly deducible from, a doctrine which we undertake to prove to be plainly revealed in Scripture.

It ought, however, to be noticed, that the precise position which this general consideration warrants us to assert, is not directly and immediately the necessity of an atonement or satisfaction, but only the necessity of the sufferings and death of Christ, *whatever may have been the character* attaching to them, or the precise effect immediately resulting from them, in connection with the salvation of sinners; and that, accordingly, it was only the warrantableness of introducing the idea, and the expression of necessity, as applicable to the subject in general, that we had in view in bringing it forward; and we have now to advert to the indications supposed to be given us in Scripture, of the grounds or reasons of this necessity. Scripture fully warrants us in saying that there are things which God cannot do. It says expressly that He cannot deny Himself; that He cannot lie; that He

cannot repent (though there is an improper sense in which repentance is ascribed to Him); and He cannot do these things, just because He is God, and not man,—because He is possessed of divine and infinite perfection. And if it be in any sense true that an atonement or satisfaction was necessary,—or, what is in substance the same thing, that God could not have pardoned sinners without it,—this must be because the attributes of His nature, or the principles of His government,—in other words, His excellence or perfection,—prevented or opposed it, or threw obstacles in the way, which could not otherwise be removed. Accordingly, this is the general position which the advocates of the necessity of an atonement maintain.

The most obvious and palpable consideration usually adduced in support of the necessity of an atonement, is that derived from the law of God, especially the threatenings which, in the law, He has denounced against transgressors. The law which God has promulgated is this, “The soul which sinneth shall die.” If God has indeed said this,—if He has uttered this threatening,—this would seem to render it certain and necessary, that wherever sin has been committed, death, with all that it includes or implies, should be inflicted, unless God were to repent, or to deny Himself, or to lie,—all which the Scripture assures us He cannot do, because of the perfection of His nature. And it is a remarkable coincidence, that the only cases in which Scripture says explicitly that God cannot do certain things, all bear upon and confirm the position, that He cannot pardon sin without an atonement; inasmuch as to say, that He could pardon sin without an atonement, would, in the circumstances, amount to a virtual declaration that He could lie, that He could repent, that He could deny Himself. Upon this ground, the possibility of men who had sinned escaping death,—that is, everlasting misery,—would seem to be precluded. If such a being as God is has threatened sin with the punishment of death, there must be a serious difficulty in the way of sinners escaping. His veracity seems to prevent this, and to present an insuperable obstacle. In pardoning sinners, or in exempting them from the death which they have incurred, it would seem that He must trample upon His own law, and disregard His own threatening; and this the very perfection of His nature manifestly forbids.

Socinians, indeed, have been accustomed to allege, that though God is obliged by His veracity to perform His promises,—because



by promising He has conferred upon His creatures a right to the fulfilment of the promise,—yet that His veracity does not oblige Him to fulfil His threatenings, because the party to whose case they apply has no right, and puts forth no claim, to their infliction. But this is a mere evasion of the difficulty. God is a law unto Himself. His own inherent perfection obliges Him always to do what is right and just, and that irrespective of any rights which His creatures may have acquired, or any claims which they may prefer. On this ground, His veracity seems equally to require that He should execute threatenings, as that He should fulfil promises. If He does not owe this to sinners, He owes it to Himself. When He threatened sin with the punishment of death, He was not merely giving an abstract declaration as to what sin merited, and might justly bring upon those who committed it; He was declaring the way and manner in which He would, in fact, treat it when it occurred. The law denouncing death as the punishment of sin was thus a virtual prediction of *what God would do* in certain circumstances; and when these circumstances occurred, His veracity required that He should act as He had foretold.

We can conceive of no way in which it is possible that the honour and integrity of the divine law could be maintained, or the divine veracity be preserved pure and unstained, if sinners were not subjected to death, *except* by an adequate atonement or satisfaction being rendered in their room and stead. No depth of reflection, no extent of experience, could suggest anything but this, which could render the sinner's exemption from death possible. There is much in the history of the world to suggest this, but nothing whatever to suggest anything else. We are not entitled, indeed, apart from the discoveries of revelation, to assert that even this would render the pardon of the sinner possible, consistently with the full exercise of the divine veracity, and full maintenance of the honour of the divine law; and still less are we entitled to assert that, even if an adequate atonement or satisfaction might render the escape of the sinner possible, it was further possible that such an atonement or satisfaction could in fact be rendered. We are not warranted to assert these things independently of revelation; but we have strong grounds for asserting that, if God did threaten death as the punishment of sin, nothing could have prevented the infliction of the threatening, and

rendered the escape of the sinner possible, except an adequate atonement or satisfaction,—that this *at least* was indispensable, if even this could have been of any avail.

But those who hold the necessity of an atonement or satisfaction in order to the pardon of the sin, and the escape of the sinner, usually rest it, not merely upon the law of God as revealed, and upon His veracity as concerned in the execution of the threatenings which He has publicly denounced, but also upon the inherent perfection of His nature, independently of any declaration He may have made, or any prediction He may have uttered,—and more especially upon His justice. The discussion of this point leads us into some more abstruse and difficult inquiries than the former ; and it must be confessed that here we have not such clear and certain materials for our conclusions, and that we should feel deeply the necessity of following closely the guidance and direction of Scripture. The representations given us in Scripture of the justice of God, are fitted to impress upon us the conviction that it requires Him to give to every one his due,—what he has merited by his conduct,—and, of course, to give to the sinner the punishment which he has deserved. What God has threatened, His veracity requires Him to inflict, *because* He has threatened it. But the threatening itself must have originated in the inherent perfection of His own nature prompting Him to punish sin as it deserves ; and to *threaten* to punish, because it is already and antecedently *right* to do so. God's law, or His revealed will, declaring what His creatures *should* do, and what He Himself *will* do, is the transcript or expression of the inherent perfections of His own nature. The acts of the divine government, and the obligations of intelligent creatures, result from, and are determined by, the divine law, as their immediate or approximate cause and standard ; but they all, as well as the divine law itself, are traceable to the divine nature,—to the essential perfections of God,—as their ultimate source or foundation. When, then, God issued the law denouncing death as the punishment of transgression, and thereby became pledged to inflict death on account of sin, because He had threatened to do so, He was merely indicating or expressing a principle or purpose which was founded on, and resulted from, that inherent perfection which, in a sense, makes it necessary for Him,—although, at the same time, He acts most freely,—to give to all their due, and of course to inflict merited punishment upon sin.

This is the substance of what is taught by orthodox divines when they lay down the position that punitive justice—or, as they usually call it, *justitia vindicatrix*—is essential to God. It is a real perfection of His nature, of which He cannot denude Himself, and which must necessarily regulate or determine the free acts of His will.

All this is in accordance with the statements of Scripture and the dictates of right reason; and these various considerations combined, fully warrant the general conclusion, that, since death has been denounced as the punishment of sin, there must be formidable obstacles in the way of sinners being pardoned and escaping from death,—that, if God should pardon sinners, some provision would be necessary for vindicating His justice and veracity, and maintaining the honour of His law;—and that the only conceivable way in which these objects could be secured, is by an adequate atonement or satisfaction rendered in the room and stead of those who had incurred the penalty of the law. Socinians have very inadequate and erroneous views of the guilt or demerit of sin, and are thus led to look upon the pardon or remission of it as a light or easy matter. But it is our duty to form our conceptions of this subject from what God has made known to us, and especially from what He has revealed to us as to the way and manner in which He must and will treat it, or deal with it. And all that God's word tells us upon this point, viewed by itself, and apart from the revelation made of an actual provision for pardoning sin and saving sinners, is fitted to impress upon us the conviction that sin fully merits, and will certainly receive, everlasting destruction from God's presence and from the glory of His power.

Another topic intimately connected with this one of the necessity of an atonement or satisfaction,—or rather, forming a part of it,—has been largely discussed in the course of this controversy,—that, namely, of the character or aspect in which God is to be regarded in dealing with sinners, with the view either of punishing them for their sins, or saving them from the punishment they have merited. Socinians, in order to show that there is no difficulty in the way of God's pardoning sin, and no necessity for an atonement or satisfaction for sin, usually represent God as acting, in this matter, either as a creditor to whom men have become debtors by sinning, or as a party who has been injured and offended by their transgressions; and then infer that, as a creditor may remit a

debt if he chooses, without exacting payment, and as an injured party may forgive an injury if he chooses, without requiring any satisfaction, so, in like manner, there is no reason why God may not forgive men's sins by a mere act of His good pleasure, without any payment or compensation, either personal or vicarious. There certainly is a foundation in scriptural statements for representing sins as debts incurred to God and to His law, and also as injuries inflicted upon Him. These representations, though figurative, are, of course, intended to convey to us some ideas concerning the true state of the case; and they suggest considerations which, in some other departments of the controversy in regard to the great doctrine of the atonement, afford strong arguments against the Socinian views. But the application they make of them to disprove the necessity of an atonement, is utterly unwarranted. It is manifestly absurd to press far the resemblance or analogy between sins on the one hand, and debts or injuries on the other; or to draw inferences merely from this resemblance. These are not the only or the principal aspects in which sins are represented in Scripture.

The primary or fundamental idea of sin is, that it is a transgression of God's law,—a violation of a rule which He has commanded us to observe; and this, therefore, should be the *leading aspect* in which it should be contemplated, when we are considering how God will deal with it. We exclude none of the scriptural representations of sin, and none of the scriptural representations of God in His dealing with it; but, while we take them all in, we must give prominence in our conceptions to the most important and fundamental. And as the essential idea of sin is not, that it is merely a debt or an injury, but that it is a violation of God's law, the leading character or aspect in which God ought to be contemplated when we regard Him as dealing with it, is not that of a creditor, or an injured party, who may remit the debt, or forgive the injury, as he chooses, but that of a lawgiver and a judge who has promulgated a just and righteous law, prohibiting sin under pain of death, and who is bound, by a regard to His own perfections, and the interests of holiness throughout the universe, to take care that His own character be fully vindicated, that the honour of His law be maintained, and that His moral government be firmly established; and who, therefore, cannot pardon sin, unless, in some way or other, full and adequate



provision be made for securing all these objects. The pardon of sin, the forgiveness of men who have broken the law and incurred its penalty, who have done that against which God has denounced death, seems to have a strong and manifest tendency to frustrate or counteract all these objects, to stain the glory of the divine perfections, to bring dishonour upon the divine law, to shake the stability of God's moral government, and to endanger the interests of righteousness and holiness throughout the universe. And when, therefore, we contemplate God not merely as a creditor or as an injured party, but as the Supreme Lawgiver and Judge, dealing with the deliberate violation, by His intelligent and responsible creatures, of a just, and holy, and good law which He had prescribed to them, and which He had sanctioned with the threatened penalty of death, we cannot conceive it to be possible that He should pardon them without an adequate atonement or satisfaction; and we are constrained to conclude, that, if forgiveness be possible at all, it can be only on the footing of the threatened penalty being endured by another party acting in their room and stead, and of this vicarious atonement being accepted by God as satisfying His justice, and answering the claims of His law.\*

Whatever evidence there is *for the necessity* of an atonement or satisfaction, in order to the pardon of sin, of course confirms the proof of its truth or reality. It is admitted on all hands, that God does pardon sinners,—that He exempts them from punishment, receives them into His favour, and admits them to the enjoyment of eternal blessedness, notwithstanding that they have sinned and broken His law. If all that we know concerning God, His government, and law, would lead us to conclude that He could not do this without an adequate atonement or satisfaction, then we may confidently expect to find that such an atonement has been made,—that such a satisfaction has been rendered. And, on the other hand, if we have sufficient evidence of the truth and reality of an atonement as a matter of fact,—and find, moreover, that this atonement consisted of a provision so very peculiar and extraordinary as the sufferings and death, in human nature, of One who was God over all, blessed for evermore,—we are fully warranted in arguing back from such a fact to its indispens-

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\* On the necessity of the Atonement, see G. J. Vossius' Defence of | Grotius, De Satisfactione, c. xxviii.,  
 | xxix., xxx.

able and absolute necessity, in order to the production of the intended result; and then, from an examination of the grounds and reasons of this established necessity, we may learn much as to the true nature of this wonderful provision, and the way and manner in which it is fitted, and was designed, to accomplish its intended object.

*Sec. III.—The Necessity and Nature of the Atonement.*

The subject of the necessity of an atonement, in order to the pardon of sin, needs to be stated and discussed with considerable care and caution, as it is one on which there is danger of men being tempted to indulge in presumptuous speculations, and of their landing, when they follow out their speculations, in conclusions of too absolute and unqualified a kind. Some of its advocates have adopted a line of argument of which the natural result would seem to be, absolutely and universally, that sin *cannot* be forgiven, and, of course, that sinners cannot be saved. A mode of representation and argument about the divine justice, the principles of the divine moral government, and the divine law and veracity, which fairly leads to this conclusion, must, of course, be erroneous, since it is admitted on all hands, as a matter of fact, that sin *is* forgiven, that sinners *are* pardoned and saved. This, therefore, is an extreme to be avoided,—this is a danger to be guarded against. The considerations on which the advocates of the necessity of an atonement usually found, derived from the scriptural representations of the divine justice, law, and veracity, manifestly, and beyond all question, warrant this position, that there are very serious and formidable obstacles to the pardon of men who have broken the law, and incurred its penalty; and thus, likewise, point out what is the nature and ground of these obstacles. The difficulty lies here, that God's justice and veracity seem to impose upon Him an obligation to punish sin, and to execute His threatenings; and if this position can really be established,—and it is the foundation of the alleged necessity of an atonement or satisfaction,—the practical result would seem to be, that the law must take its course, and that the penalty must be inflicted. The argument would thus seem to prove too much, and, of course, prove nothing; a consideration well fitted to impress upon us the necessity of care and caution in stating and arguing the question,

though certainly not sufficient to warrant the conclusion which some\* have deduced from it,—namely, that the whole argument commonly brought forward in support of the necessity of an atonement is unsatisfactory.

I have no doubt that there is truth and soundness in the argument, when rightly stated and applied. The law which God has promulgated, threatening death as the punishment of sin, manifestly throws a very serious obstacle in the way of sin being pardoned, both because it seems to indicate that God's perfections require that it be punished, and because the non-infliction of the penalty threatened seems plainly fitted to lead men to regard the law and its threatenings with indifference and contempt,—or at least to foster the conviction, that some imperfection attached to it as originally promulgated, since it had been found necessary, in the long run, to change or abrogate it, or at least to abstain from following it out, and thereby virtually to set it aside. Had God made no further revelation to men than that of the original moral law, demanding perfect obedience, with the threatened penalty of death in the event of transgression; and were the only conjecture they could form about their future destiny derived from the knowledge that they had been placed under this law, and had exposed themselves to its penalty by sinning, the conclusion which alone it would be reasonable for them to adopt, would be, that they must and would suffer the full penalty they had incurred by transgression. This is an important position, and runs directly counter to the whole substance and spirit of the Socinian views upon this subject. If, in these circumstances,—and with this position impressed upon their minds, as the only practical result of all that they then knew upon the subject,—they were further informed, upon unquestionable authority, that many sinners,—many men who had incurred the penalty of the law,—would, in point of fact, be pardoned and saved; then the conclusion which, in right reason, must be deducible from this information would be, *not* that the law had been abrogated or thrown aside, as imperfect or defective, but that some very peculiar and extraordinary provision had been found out and carried into effect, by which the law might be satisfied and its honour maintained, while yet those who had incurred its penalty were forgiven. And if, assuming

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\* *Vide* Gilbert on the Christian Atonement, Lecture v.

this to be true or probable, the question were asked, What this provision could be? it would either appear to be an insoluble problem; or the only thing that could commend itself to men's reason, although reason might not itself suggest it, would be something of the nature of an atonement or satisfaction, by the substitution of another party in the room of those who had transgressed. The principles of human jurisprudence, and various incidents in the history of the world, might justify this as not unreasonable in itself, and fitted to serve some such purposes as the exigencies of the case seemed to require.

In this way, a certain train of thought, if once suggested, might be followed out, and shown to be reasonable,—to be invested, at least, with a high degree of probability; and this is just, in substance, what is commonly advocated by theologians under the head of the necessity of an atonement. There is, first, the necessity of maintaining the honour of the law, by the execution of its threatenings against transgressors; then there is the necessity of some provision for maintaining the honour of the law, *if* these threatenings are not, in fact, to be executed upon those who have incurred them; and then, lastly, there is the investigation of the question,—of what nature should this provision be; and what are the principles by which it must be regulated? And it is here that the investigation of the subject of the necessity of an atonement comes in, to throw some light *upon its true nature and bearings*.

The examination of the topics usually discussed under the head of the necessity of an atonement, viewed in connection with the undoubted truth, that many sinners are, in point of fact, pardoned and saved, leads us to expect to find some extraordinary provision made for effecting this result, and thereby gives a certain measure of antecedent probability to the allegation that such a provision has been made, and thus tends to confirm somewhat the actual evidence we may have of its truth and reality; while the same considerations which lead us to the conclusion that some such provision was necessary, guide us also to some inferences as to what it *must* consist in, and what immediate purposes it must be fitted to serve. The general substance of what is thus indicated as necessary, or as to be expected, in the nature and bearings of the provision, is this,—it must consist with, and must fully manifest all the perfections of God, and especially His justice and His hatred of sin; and it must be fitted to impress right conceptions



of the perfection and unchangeableness of the divine law, and of the danger of transgressing it. God, of course, cannot do, or even permit, anything which is fitted, in its own nature, or has an inherent tendency, to convey erroneous conceptions of His character or law, of His moral government, or of the principles which regulate His dealings with His intelligent creatures; and assuredly no sinner will ever be saved, except in a way, and through a provision, in which God's justice, His hatred of sin, and His determination to maintain the honour of His law, are as fully exercised and manifested, as they would have been by the actual infliction of the full penalty which He had threatened. These perfections and qualities of God must be exercised as well as manifested, and they must be manifested as well as exercised. God must always act or regulate His volitions and procedure in accordance with the perfections and attributes of His nature, independently of any regard to His creatures, or to the impressions which they may, in point of fact, entertain with respect to Him; while it is also true that He must ever act in a way which accurately manifests His perfections, or is fitted, in its own nature, to convey to His creatures correct conceptions of what He is, and of what are the principles which regulate His dealings with them. In accordance with these principles, He must, in any provision for pardoning and saving sinners, both exercise and manifest His justice and His hatred of sin,—that is, He must act in the way which these qualities naturally and necessarily lead Him to adopt; and He must follow a course which is fitted to manifest Him to His creatures as really doing all this.

The practical result of these considerations is this, that if a provision is to be made for removing the obstacles to the pardon of sinners,—for accomplishing the objects just described, while yet sinners are saved,—there is no way in which we can conceive this to be done, except by some other suitable party taking their place, and suffering in their room and stead the penalty they had merited. Could any such party be found, were he able and willing to do this, and were he actually to do it, then we can conceive that in this way God's justice might be satisfied, and the honour of His law maintained, because in this way the same views of the divine character, law, and government, and of the danger and demerit of sin, would be presented, as if sinners themselves had suffered the penalty in their own persons. All this, of course,

implies, that the party interposing in behalf of sinners should occupy their place, and act in their room and stead, and that he should bear the penalty which they had incurred; because in this way, but in no other, so far as we can form any conception upon the subject, could the obstacles be removed, and the necessary objects be effected. And thus the general considerations on which the necessity of an atonement is maintained, are fitted to impress upon us the conviction, that there must be a true and real substitution of the party interposing to save sinners, in the room and stead of those whom he purposes to save, and the actual endurance by him of the penalty which they had incurred, and which they must, but for this interposition, have suffered.

A party qualified to interpose in behalf of sinners, in order to obtain or effect their forgiveness, by suffering in their room and stead the penalty they had deserved, must possess very peculiar qualifications indeed. The sinners to be saved were an innumerable company; the penalty which each of them had incurred was fearful and infinite, even everlasting misery; and men, of course, without revelation, are utterly incompetent to form a conception of any being who might be qualified for this. But the word of God brings before us One so peculiarly constituted and qualified, as at once to suggest the idea, that He might be able to accomplish this,—One who was GOD and man in one person; One who, being from eternity God, did in time assume human nature into personal union with the divine,—who assumed human nature for the purpose of saving sinners,—who was thus qualified to act as the substitute of sinners, and to endure suffering in their room; while at the same time He was qualified, by His possession of the divine nature, to give to all that He did and suffered a value and efficacy truly infinite, and fully adequate to impart to all He did a power or virtue fitted to accomplish anything, or everything, which He might intend to effect.

We formerly had occasion to show, that in regard to a subject so peculiar and extraordinary as the incarnation, sufferings, and death of the Son of God,—of One who was a possessor of the divine nature,—we are warranted in saying that, if these things really took place, they were, strictly speaking, *necessary*; that is, in other words, that they could not have taken place, if the object to which they were directed could possibly have been effected in any other way, or by any other means. And the

mere contemplation of the fact of the sufferings and death of such a Being, independent of the full and specific information given us in Scripture as to the causes, objects, and consequences of His death, goes far to establish the truth and reality of His vicarious atoning sacrifice. When we view Him merely as a man,—but as a man, of course, perfectly free from sin, immaculately pure and holy,—we find it to be impossible to account for His sufferings upon the Socinian theory, or upon any theory but that of His suffering in the room and stead of others, and enduring the penalty which they had merited.

It is not disputed that sin is, in the case of intelligent and rational beings, the cause of suffering; and we cannot conceive that, under the government of a God of infinite power, and wisdom, and justice, and goodness, any such Being should be subjected to suffering except for sin. The suffering,—the severe and protracted suffering,—and, finally, the cruel and ignominious death of Christ, viewing Him merely as a perfectly holy and just man, are facts, the reality of which is universally admitted, and of which, therefore, all equally are called upon to give some explanation. The Socinians have no explanation to give of them. It is repugnant to all right conceptions of the principles of God's moral government, that He should inflict upon an intelligent and responsible being suffering which is not warranted or sanctioned by sin as the cause or ground of it, as that which truly justifies and explains it,—that He should inflict suffering upon a holy and innocent Being, merely in order that others may be, in some way or other, benefited by His sufferings. It is, indeed, very common, in the administration of God's moral government, that the sin of one being should be the means or occasion of bringing suffering upon others; but then it holds true, either that these others are also themselves sinners, or that they are legally liable to all the suffering that has ever been inflicted upon them, or permitted to befall them. The peculiarity in Christ's case is, that while perfectly free from sin, original as well as actual, He was yet subjected to severe suffering and to a cruel death; and this not merely by the permission, but by the special agency and appointment, of God. And this was done, according to the Socinian hypothesis, merely in order that others might, in some way or other, derive benefit from the suffering and death inflicted upon Him. There is here no explanation of the admitted

facts of the case, that is at all consistent with the principles of God's moral government. The doctrine of a vicarious atonement alone affords anything like an explanation of these facts; because, by means of it, we can account for them in consistency with the principle that sin,—that is, either personal or imputed,—is the cause, the warrant, and the explanation of suffering. The Scripture assures us that Christ suffered for sin,—that He died for sin. And even viewing this statement apart from the fuller and more specific information given us in other parts of Scripture, with respect to the connection between the sin of men and the sufferings of the Saviour, and regarding it only in its relation to the general principles of God's moral government, we are warranted in concluding that sin was the impulsive and meritorious cause of His suffering; and from this we are entitled to draw the inference, that, as He had no sin of His own, He must in some way have become involved in, and responsible for, the sin of others, and that this was the cause or reason why He was subjected to death. On all these various grounds we have a great deal of general argument upon the subject of the atonement, independent of a minute and exact examination of particular scriptural statements, which tends to confirm its truth, and to illustrate its general nature and bearing.

We have seen that some of the attributes of God, and some things we know as to His moral government and law, plainly suggest to us the convictions, that there are serious obstacles to the forgiveness of sin,—that if sin is to be forgiven, some extraordinary provision must be made for the exercise and manifestation of the divine justice and holiness, so that He shall still be, and appear to be, just and holy, even while pardoning sin and admitting sinners into the enjoyment of His favour; for making His creatures see and feel, that, though they are delivered from the curse of the law which they had broken, that law is, notwithstanding, of absolute perfection, of unchangeable obligation, and entitled to all honour and respect. The only thing that has ever been conceived or suggested at all fitted to accomplish this, is, that atonement or satisfaction should be made by the endurance of the penalty of the law in the room and stead of those who should be pardoned. This seems adapted to effect the object, and thereby to remove the obstacles, while in no other way can we conceive it possible that this end can be attained.



And while the holiness, justice, and veracity of God seem to require this, there is nothing in His benevolence or placability that precludes it. The benevolence or placability of God could produce merely a readiness to forgive and to save sinners, *provided* this could be effected in full consistency with all the other attributes of His nature, all the principles of His moral government, and all the objects He was bound to aim at, as the Law-giver and Governor of the universe; and these, as we have seen, throw obstacles in the way of the result being effected. The actings of God,—His actual dealings with His creatures,—must be the result of the combined exercise of all His perfections; and He cannot, in any instance, act inconsistently with any one of them. His benevolence cannot be a mere indiscriminate determination to confer happiness, and His placability cannot be a mere indiscriminate determination to forgive those who have transgressed against Him.

The Scriptures reveal to us a fact of the deepest interest, and one that ought never to be forgotten or lost sight of when we are contemplating the principles that regulate God's dealings with His creatures—namely, that some of the angels kept not their first estate, but fell by transgression; and that no provision has been made for pardoning and saving them,—no atonement or satisfaction provided for their sin,—no opportunity of escape or recovery afforded them. They sinned, or broke God's law; and their doom, in consequence, was unchangeably and eternally fixed. This is a fact,—this was the way in which God dealt with a portion of His intelligent creatures. Of course, He acted in this case in full accordance with the perfections of His nature and the principles of His government. We are bound to employ this fact, which God has revealed to us, as one of the materials which He has given us for enabling us to know Him. We are bound to believe, in regard to Him, whatever this fact implies or establishes, and to refuse to believe whatever it contradicts or precludes. And it manifestly requires us to believe this at least, that there is nothing in the essential perfections of God which affords any sufficient ground for the conclusion that He will certainly pardon transgressors of His laws, or make any provision for saving them from the just and legitimate consequences of their sins. This is abundantly manifest. And this consideration affords good ground to suspect that it was the flat contra-

diction which the scriptural history of the fall and fate of angels presents to the views of the Socinians, with regard to the principles of God's moral government, that has generally led them, like the Sadducees of old, to maintain that there is neither angel nor spirit, though there is evidently not the slightest appearance of unreasonableness in the general doctrine of the existence of superior spiritual beings, employed by God in accomplishing His purposes.

As, then, there is nothing in God's benevolence or placability which affords any certain ground for the conclusion that He must and will pardon sinners, so there *can* be nothing in these qualities inconsistent with His requiring atonement or satisfaction in order to their forgiveness, while other attributes of His nature seem plainly to demand this. God's benevolence and placability are fully manifested in a readiness to bless and to forgive, in so far as this can be done, in consistency with the other attributes of His nature, and the whole principles of His moral government. And while there is nothing in His benevolence or placability inconsistent with His requiring an atonement or satisfaction in order to forgiveness, it is further evident, that if He Himself should provide this atonement or satisfaction to His own justice and law, and be the real author and deviser of all the plans and arrangements connected with the attainment of the blessed result of forgiveness and salvation to sinners, a scheme would be presented to us which would most fully and strikingly manifest the combined glory of all the divine perfections,—in which He would show Himself to be the just God, and the justifier of the ungodly,—in which righteousness and peace should meet together, mercy and truth should embrace each other. And this is the scheme which is plainly and fully revealed to us in the word of God. Provision is made for pardoning men's sins and saving their souls, through the vicarious sufferings and death of One who was God and man in one person, and who voluntarily agreed to take their place, and to suffer in their room and stead; thus satisfying divine justice, complying with the demands of the law by enduring its penalty, and manifesting most fully the sinfulness and the danger of sin. But this was done by God Himself, who desired the salvation of sinners, and determined to effect it; and who, in consequence, *sent* His Son into the world to die in man's room and stead,—who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. So

that here we have a scheme for pardoning and saving sinners which, from its very nature, must be effectual, and which not only is in full accordance with the perfections of God, but most gloriously illustrates them all. The apostle says expressly, “that God set forth His Son to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness,” or with a view to the demonstration of His righteousness;\* and it is true that the shedding of Christ’s blood as a propitiation, viewed with reference to its necessity and proper nature, does declare God’s righteousness, or justice and holiness; while, viewed in its originating motives and glorious results, it most fully declares God’s marvellous love to the children of men, and His determination to save sinners with an everlasting salvation.

*Sec. IV.—Objections to the Doctrine of Atonement.*

The proper order to be followed in the investigation of this subject, or indeed of any great scriptural doctrine, is the same as that which I stated and explained in considering the doctrine of the Trinity,—namely, that we should first *ascertain*, by a full and minute examination of all the scriptural statements bearing upon the subject, what the Bible teaches regarding it; and then consider the general objections that may be adduced against it, taking care to keep them in their proper place, as objections, and to be satisfied with showing that they cannot be proved to have any weight; and if they should appear to be really relevant and well-founded, and not mere sophisms or difficulties, applying them, as sound reason dictates, not in the way of reversing the judgment already formed upon the appropriate evidence as to what it is that the Bible really teaches, but in the way of rejecting a professed revelation that teaches doctrines which can, *ex hypothesi*, be conclusively disproved. But as the objections made by Socinians to the doctrine of the atonement are chiefly connected with some of those general and abstract topics to which we have already had occasion to advert, it may be most useful and convenient to notice them *now*, especially as the consideration of them is fitted, like that of the *necessity* of an atonement, already considered, to throw some light upon the general nature and import of the doctrine itself.

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\* Rom. iii. 25, 26, εἰς ἢ πρὸς ἕνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ.

Many of the objections commonly adduced against the doctrine of atonement are mere cavils,—mere exhibitions of unwarranted presumption,—and are sufficiently disposed of by the general considerations of the exalted and incomprehensible nature of the subject itself, and of the great mystery of godliness, God made manifest in the flesh, on which it is based. These it is unnecessary to dwell upon, after the exposition of the general principles applicable to the investigation of these subjects which we have already given. Some are founded upon misrepresentations of the real bearing, objects, and effects of the atonement, especially in its relation to the character and moral government of God. Nothing, for instance, is more common than for Socinians to represent the generally received doctrine of atonement as implying that God the Father is an inexorable tyrant, who insisted upon the rigorous execution of the threatenings of the law until Christ interposed, and by His offering up of Himself satisfied God's demands, and thereby introduced into the divine mind a totally different state of feeling in regard to sinners,—the result of which was, that He pardoned in place of punishing them. This, of course, is not the doctrine of the atonement, but a mere caricature of it. Scripture plainly teaches,—and the advocates of an atonement maintain, not only as being perfectly consistent with their doctrine, but as a constituent part of it,—that love to men, and a desire to save them from ruin, existed eternally in the divine mind,—resulting from the inherent perfections of God's nature,—that this love and compassion led Him to devise and execute a plan of salvation, and to send His Son to save sinners by offering an atonement for their sins. The atonement, then, was the consequence, and not the cause, of God's love to men, and of His desire to save them. It introduced no feeling into the divine mind which did not exist there before; though it certainly removed obstacles which other principles of His nature and government interposed to the full outflowing of the love and compassion which existed, and opened up a channel by which God, in full accordance with, and in glorious illustration of, all His perfections, might bestow upon men pardon and all other spiritual blessings, and finally eternal life. This is all that can be meant by the scriptural statements about the turning away of God's anger and His reconciliation to men, when these are ascribed to the interposition and atonement of Christ. This is all



that the defenders of an atonement understand by these statements. There is nothing in their views upon this, or upon any other subject, that requires them to understand these statements in any other sense; and thus understood, they are fully accordant both with the generally received doctrine of the atonement, and with everything else that Scripture teaches concerning God, and concerning the principles that regulate His dealings with men. *This* objection, then, though it has been repeated constantly from the time of Socinus till the present day, is founded wholly upon a misrepresentation of the doctrine objected to,—a misrepresentation for which there is no warrant or excuse whatever, except, perhaps, the declamations of some ignorant and injudicious preachers of the doctrine, who have striven to represent it in the way they thought best fitted to impress the popular mind.

The only objections of a general kind to the doctrine of an atonement that are entitled to any notice, are these: First, that it involves injustice, by representing the innocent as punished in the room of the guilty, and the guilty thereby escaping; secondly, that it is inconsistent with the free grace, or gratuitous favour, which the Scriptures ascribe to God in the remission of men's sins; and, thirdly, that it is fitted to injure the interests of holiness, or morality. We shall very briefly advert to these in succession, but without attempting anything like a full discussion of them.

First, It is alleged to be unjust to punish the innocent in the room of the guilty, and on this ground to allow the transgressors to escape. Now, the defenders of the doctrine of atonement admit that it does assume or imply the state of matters which is here described, and represented as unjust,—namely, the punishment of the innocent in the room of the guilty. Some of them, indeed, scruple about the application of the terms *punishment* and *penal* to the sufferings and death of Christ. But this scrupulosity appears to me to be frivolous and vexatious, resting upon no sufficient ground, and serving no good purpose. If men, indeed, begin with defining punishment to mean the infliction of suffering upon an offender on account of his offence,—thus including the actual personal demerit of the sufferer in the idea which the word conveys,—they settle the question of the penalty, or penal character, of Christ's suffering by the mere definition. In this sense, of course, Christ's sufferings were not penal. But the definition is purely arbitrary, and is not required by general usage, which

warrants us in regarding and describing as penal any suffering inflicted judicially, or in the execution of the provisions of law, on account of sin. And this arbitrary restriction of the meaning of the terms punishment and penal is of no use, although some of those who have recourse to it seem to think so, in warding off Socinian objections;—because, in the first place, there is really nothing in the doctrine of the atonement worth contending for, if it be not true that Christ endured, in the room and stead of sinners, the suffering which the law demanded of them on account of their sins, and which, but for His enduring it, as their substitute, they must themselves have endured,—and because, in the second place, the allegation of injustice applies, with all the force it has, to the position just stated, whether Christ's sufferings be *called* penal or not.

With regard to the objection itself, the following are the chief considerations to be attended to, by the exposition and application of which it is fully disposed of: *First*, that, as we have already had occasion to state and explain in a different connection, the sufferings and death of an innocent person in this matter are realities which all admit, and which all equally are bound to explain. Christ's sufferings were as great upon the Socinian, as upon the orthodox, theory with regard to their cause and object; while our doctrine of His being subjected to suffering because of the sin of others being imputed to Him, or laid upon Him, brings the facts of the case into accordance with some generally recognised principles of God's moral government, which, upon the Socinian scheme, is impossible. The injustice, of course, is not alleged to be in the fact that Christ, an innocent person, was subjected to so much suffering,—for there remains the same fact upon any hypothesis,—but in His suffering in the room and stead of sinners, with the view, and to the effect, of their escaping punishment.

Now, we observe, *secondly*, that this additional circumstance of His suffering being vicarious and expiatory,—which may be said to constitute our theory as to the grounds, causes, or objects of His suffering,—in place of introducing an additional difficulty into the matter, is the only thing which contributes in any measure to explain it. And it does contribute in some measure to explain it, because it can be shown to accord with the ordinary principles of enlightened reason to maintain—first, that it is not of *the essence* of the idea of punishment, that it must necessarily, and in every

instance, be inflicted upon the very person who has committed the sin that calls for it; or, as it is expressed by Grotius, who has applied the recognised principles of jurisprudence and law to this subject with great ability: "Notandum est, esse quidem essentielle pœnæ, ut infligatur ob peccatum, sed non item essentielle ei esse ut infligatur ipsi qui peccavit: \*—and, secondly, that substitution and satisfaction, in the matter of inflicting punishment, are to some extent recognised in the principles of human jurisprudence, and in the arrangements of human governments; while there is much also, in the analogies of God's providential government of the world, to sanction them, or to afford answers to the allegations of their injustice.

*Thirdly*, the transference of penal suffering, or suffering judicially inflicted in accordance with the provisions of law, from one party to another, cannot be proved to be universally and in all cases unjust. No doubt, an act of so peculiar a kind,—involving, as it certainly does, a plain deviation from the ordinary regular course of procedure,—requires, in each case, a distinct and specific ground or cause to warrant it. But there are, at least, two cases in which this transference of penal suffering on account of sin from one party to another is generally recognised as just, and in which, at least, it can be easily proved, that all ground is removed for charging it with injustice. These are,—first, when the party who is appointed to suffer on account of the sin of another, has himself become legally liable to a charge of guilt, adequate to account for all the suffering inflicted; and, secondly, when he voluntarily consents to occupy the place of the offender, and to bear, in his room, the punishment which he had merited. In these cases, there is manifestly no injustice in the transference of penal suffering, so far as the parties more immediately affected are concerned; and if the *general* and *public* ends of punishment are at the same time fully provided for by the transference, or *notwithstanding* the transference, then there is, in these cases, no injustice of any kind committed.

The second of these cases is that which applies to the sufferings and death of Christ. He willingly agreed to stand in the room and stead of sinners, and to bear the punishment which they

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\* De Satisfact., c. iv., p. 85. See also Turretin. De Satisfact., Pars. ii., sec. xxxvi.

had merited. And if there be no injustice generally in Christ—though perfectly innocent—suffering so much as He endured, and no injustice in this suffering being penally inflicted upon Him on account of the sins of others,—His own free consent to occupy their place and to bear the punishment due to their sins being interposed,—there can be no injustice in the only other additional idea involved in our doctrine,—namely, that this suffering, inflicted upon Him, is appointed and proclaimed as the ground or means of exempting the offenders from the punishment they had deserved; or, as it is put by Grotius, “*Cum per hos modos*” (the cases previously mentioned, the consent of the substitute being one of them), “*actus factus est licitus, quo minus deinde ordinetur ad pœnam peccati alieni, nihil intercedit, modo inter eum qui peccavit et puniendum aliqua sit conjunctio.*”\* The only parties who would be injured or treated unjustly by this last feature in the case, are the lawgiver and the community (to apply the principle to the case of human jurisprudence); and if the honour and authority of the law, and the general interests of the community, are fully provided for by means of, or notwithstanding, the transference of the penal infliction,—as we undertake to prove is the case with respect to the vicarious and expiatory suffering of Christ,—then the whole ground for the charge of injustice is taken away.

The second objection is, that the doctrine of atonement or satisfaction is inconsistent with the scriptural representations of the gratuitousness of forgiveness,—of the freeness of the grace of God in pardoning sinners. It is said that God exercises no grace or free favour in pardoning sin, if He has received full satisfaction for the offences of those whom He pardons. This objection is not confined to Socinians. They adduce it against the doctrine of atonement or satisfaction altogether; while Arminians,† and others who hold the doctrine of universal or indefinite atonement, adduce it against those higher, stricter, and more accurate views of substitution and satisfaction with which the doctrine of a definite or limited atonement stands necessarily connected. When they are called to deal with this Socinian objection, they usually admit that the objection is unanswerable, as adduced against

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\* Grotius, de Satisfactione, p. 86.

† Vide Limborch, Theol. Christ., Lib. iii., c., xxi.



the stricter views of substitution and satisfaction held by most Calvinists ; while they contend that it is of no force in opposition to their modified and more rational views upon this subject,—an admission by which, as it seems to me, they virtually, in effect though not in intention, betray the whole cause of the atonement into the hands of the Socinians. As this objection has been stated and answered in our Confession of Faith, we shall follow its guidance in making a few observations upon it.

It is there said,\* “ Christ, by His obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified, and did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to His Father’s justice in their behalf.” Here the doctrine of substitution and satisfaction is fully and explicitly declared in its highest and strictest sense. But the authors of the Confession were not afraid of being able to defend, in perfect consistency with this, the free grace, the gratuitous mercy of God, in justifying,—that is, in pardoning and accepting sinners. And, accordingly, they go on to say, “ Yet, inasmuch as He was given by the Father for them, and His obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead, and both freely, not for anything in them, their justification is only of free grace ; that both the exact justice and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners.” Now, the grounds here laid for maintaining the free grace of God in the forgiveness of sinners, notwithstanding that a full atonement or satisfaction was made for their transgressions, are two : first, that Christ, the atoner or satisfier, was given by the Father for them,—that is, that the Father Himself devised and provided the atonement or satisfaction,—provided it, so to speak, at His own cost,—by not sparing His own Son, but delivering Him up for us all. If this be true,—if men had no right whatever to such a provision,—if they had done, and could do, nothing whatever to merit or procure it,—then this consideration must necessarily render the whole of the subsequent process based upon it, in its bearing upon men, purely gratuitous,—altogether of free grace,—unless, indeed, *at some subsequent stage*, men should be able to do something meritorious and efficacious for themselves in the matter. But then, secondly, God not only freely provided the satisfaction,—He likewise, when it was rendered by Christ, accepted it in the room of all those who

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\* C. xi., s. 3.

are pardoned, and this, too, freely, or without anything in them,—that is, without their having done, or being able to do, anything to merit or procure it, or anything which it involves. Pardon, therefore, and acceptance are freely or gratuitously given to men, though they were purchased by Christ, who paid the price of His precious blood. The scriptural statements about the free grace of God in pardoning and accepting men, on which the objection is founded, assert or imply only the gratuitousness of the blessings in so far as the individuals who ultimately receive them are concerned, and contain nothing whatever that, either directly or by implication, denies that they were purchased by Christ, by the full satisfaction which He rendered in the room and stead of those who finally partake of them; while the gratuitousness of God's grace in the matter, *viewed as an attribute or quality of His*, is fully secured and manifested by His providing and accepting the satisfaction.

These considerations are amply sufficient to answer the Socinian objection about free grace and gratuitous remission, even on the concession of the strictest views of the substitution and satisfaction of Christ; and without dwelling longer on this subject, I would merely remark in general, that it holds true equally of the grounds of this Socinian objection, and of the concession made to it by Arminians and other defenders of universal atonement,—the concession, namely, that it is unanswerable upon the footing of the stricter views of substitution and satisfaction; and indeed, I may say, it holds true generally of the grounds of the opposition made to the doctrine of definite or limited atonement,—that they are chiefly based upon the unwarrantable practice of taking up the different parts or branches of the scheme of redemption, as unfolded in Scripture, *separately*, and viewing them in isolation from each other, in place of considering them together, as parts of one great whole, and in their relation to each other and to the entire scheme.

The third and last objection to which we proposed to advert is, that the doctrine of the atonement is fitted to injure the interests of holiness or morality. The general ground on which this allegation is commonly made is,—that the introduction of an atonement or satisfaction by another party is held to release men from the obligations of the moral law; and that the general tendency of the doctrine is to lead men to be careless and indifferent about the regulation of their conduct and their growth in holiness. This

is just the common objection usually made to the whole scheme of the doctrines of grace; and in this, as well as in other applications of it, it can be easily shown that the objection proceeds upon an erroneous and defective view of the state of the case, and upon a low and grovelling sense of the motives by which men are, or should be, animated. The whole extent to which the atonement or satisfaction of Christ affects men's relation to the law is this, that men are exempted from paying, in their own persons, the penalty they had incurred, and are saved from its infliction by its being borne by another in their room and stead. Now, there is certainly nothing in this which has any appearance of relaxing the obligation of the law as a rule or standard which they are bound to follow. There is nothing in this which has any tendency to convey the impression that God is unconcerned about the honour of His law, or that we may trifle with its requirements with impunity. The whole object and tendency of the doctrine of atonement is to convey the very opposite views and impressions with regard to the law,—the obligation which it imposes, and the respect and reverence which are due to it.

In order to form a right conception of the moral tendency of a doctrine, we must conceive of the case of a man who understands and believes it,—who is practically applying it according to its true nature and tendency, and living under its influence,—and then consider how *it is fitted to operate* upon his character, motives, and actions. And to suppose that the doctrine of the atonement, understood, believed, and applied, can lead men to be careless about regulating their conduct according to God's law, is to regard them as incapable of being influenced by any other motive than a concern about their own safety,—to imagine that, having attained to a position of safety, they must thenceforth be utterly uninfluenced by anything they have ever learned or heard about God, and sin, and His law, and eternity, and totally unmoved by any benefits that have been conferred upon them. When men adduce this objection against the doctrine of the atonement, they unconsciously make a manifestation of their own character and motives. In bringing forward the objection, they are virtually saying, "If we believed the doctrine of the atonement, we would certainly lead very careless and immoral lives." And here I have no doubt they are speaking the truth, according to their present views and motives. But this, of course, implies a

virtual confession,—first, that any outward decency which their conduct may at present exhibit, is to be traced *solely* to the fear of punishment; and, secondly, that if they were only secured against punishment, they would find much greater pleasure in sin than in holiness, much greater satisfaction in serving the devil than in serving God; and that they would never think of showing any gratitude to Him who had conferred the safety and deliverance on which they place so much reliance. Socinians virtually confess all this, with respect to their own present character and motives, when they charge the doctrine of the atonement with a tendency unfavourable to the interests of morality. But if men's character and motives are, as they should be, influenced by the views they have been led to form concerning God and His law; if they are capable of being affected by the contemplation of noble and exalted objects, by admiration of excellence, and by a sense of thankfulness for benefits,—instead of being animated solely by a mere desire to secure their own safety and comfort,—they must find in the doctrine of the atonement,—and in the conceptions upon all important subjects which it is fitted to form,—motives amply sufficient to lead them to hate sin, to fear and love God, to cherish affection and gratitude towards Him who came in God's name to seek and to save them, and to set their affections on things above, where He sitteth at the right hand of God. These are the elements from which alone—as is proved both by the nature of the case and the experience of the world—anything like high and pure morality will ever proceed; and no position of this nature can be more certain, than that the believers in the doctrine of the atonement have done much more in every way to adorn the doctrine of our God and Saviour, than those who have denied it.

There is, then, no real weight in the objections commonly adduced against the doctrine of the atonement. Not that there are not difficulties connected with the subject, which we are unable fully to solve; but there is nothing so formidable as to tempt us to make a very violent effort—and that, certainly, is necessary—in the way of distorting and perverting Scripture, in order to get rid of it; and nothing to warrant us in rejecting the divine authority of the Bible, because it establishes this doctrine with such full and abundant evidence. We have already seen a good deal, in considerations derived from what we know



concerning the divine character and moral government, fitted to lead us to believe, by affording at least the strongest probabilities and presumptions, that the method of an atonement or satisfaction might be that which would be adopted for pardoning and saving sinners; and that this method really involves the substitution of the Son of God in the room and stead of those who are saved by Him, and His endurance, as their surety and substitute, of the punishment which they had deserved by their sin. But the full proof of this great doctrine is to be found only in a minute and careful examination of the meaning of scriptural statements; and in the prosecution of this subject, it has been conclusively proved that the generally received doctrine of the atonement is so thoroughly established by Scripture, and so interwoven with its whole texture, that they must stand or fall together; and that any man who denies the substance of the common doctrine upon this subject, would really act a much more honest and rational part than Socinians generally do, if he would openly deny that the Bible is to be regarded as the rule of faith, or as entitled to reverence or respect as a communication from God.

*Sec. V.—Scriptural Evidence for the Atonement.*

We cannot enter into anything like an *exposition* of the Scripture evidence in support of the commonly received doctrine of the atonement, the general nature and import of which we have endeavoured to explain. This evidence is collected from the whole field of Scripture, and comprehends a great extent and variety of materials, every branch of which has, upon both sides, been subjected to a thorough critical investigation. The evidence bearing upon this great doctrine may be said to comprehend all that is contained in Scripture upon the subject of sacrifices, from the commencement of the history of our fallen race; all that is said about the nature, causes, and consequences of the sufferings and death of Christ; and all that is revealed as to the way and manner in which men do, in point of fact, obtain or receive the forgiveness of their sins, or exemption from the penal consequences to which their sins have exposed them. The general observations which we have already made about the Socinian mode of dealing with and interpreting Scripture, and the illustrations we gave of these general observations in their application to the

doctrine of the Trinity and the person of Christ,—the substance of all that we have stated in the way of explaining both how scriptural statements should and should *not* be dealt with, and what are the principles which, in right reason, though in opposition to self-styled rationalism, ought to regulate this matter,—are equally applicable to the subject of the atonement—are equally illustrative of the way in which the scriptural statements bearing upon this point should, and should not, be treated and applied. I shall therefore say nothing more on these general topics. The few observations which I have to make on the scriptural evidence in support of the doctrine of the atonement, must be restricted to the object of giving some hints or suggestions as to the way in which this subject ought to be investigated, pointing out some of the leading divisions under which the evidences may be classed, and the leading points that must be attended to and kept in view in examining it.

That Christ suffered and died for our good, and in order to benefit us,—in order that thereby sinners might be pardoned and saved,—and that by suffering and dying He has done something or other intended and fitted to contribute to the accomplishment of this object,—is, of course, admitted by all who profess to believe, in any sense, in the divine origin of the Christian revelation. And the main question discussed in the investigation of the subject of the atonement really resolves, as I formerly explained, into this: What is the relation actually subsisting between the death of Christ and the forgiveness of men's sins? In what way does the one bear upon and affect the other? Now, the doctrine which has been generally received in the Christian church upon this all-important question is this: That Christ, in order to save men from sin and its consequences, voluntarily took their place, and suffered and died in their room and stead; that He offered up Himself a sacrifice for them; that His death was a punishment inflicted upon Him because *they* had deserved death; that it was in a fair and reasonable sense the penalty which they had incurred; that by suffering death as a penal infliction in their room and stead, He has satisfied the claims or demands of the divine justice and the divine law; and by making satisfaction in their room, has expiated or atoned for their sins, and has thus procured for them redemption and reconciliation with God.

The scriptural proof of this position overturns at once both

the Socinian theory,—which restricts the efficacy of Christ's sufferings and death to their fitness for confirming and establishing truths, and supplying motives and encouragements to repentance and holiness, which are with them the true grounds or causes of the forgiveness of sinners,—and also the theory commonly held by the Arians, which, without including the ideas of substitution and satisfaction, represents Christ as, in some way or other, acquiring by His suffering and death a certain influence with God, which He employs in obtaining for men the forgiveness of their sins. The proof of the generally received doctrine overturns at once both these theories, not by establishing directly and positively that they are false,—for, as I formerly explained in the general statement of this subject, they are true so far as they go,—but by showing that they do not contain the whole truth; that they embody only the smallest and least important part of what Scripture teaches; and that there are other ideas fully warranted by Scripture, and absolutely necessary in order to anything like a complete and correct representation of the whole Scripture doctrine upon the subject.

One of the first and most obvious considerations that occurs in directing our attention to the testimony of Scripture upon the subject is, that neither the Socinian nor the Arian doctrine is reconcilable with the *peculiarity* and the *immediateness* of the connection which the general strain of scriptural language indicates as subsisting between the death of Christ and the forgiveness of sinners; while all this is in fullest harmony with the orthodox doctrine. If the death of Christ bears upon the forgiveness of sin only indirectly and remotely through the medium or intervention of the way in which it bears upon men's convictions, motives, and conduct, and if it bears upon this result only in a way in which *other* causes or influences, and even other things contained in the history of Christ Himself, do or might equally bear upon it,—and *all this is implied in the denial of the doctrine of the atonement*,—then it seems impossible to explain why in Scripture such special and peculiar importance is ascribed to Christ's death in this matter; why the forgiveness of sin is *never* ascribed to any other cause or source of right views or good motives,—such, for instance, as Christ's teaching, or His resurrection; and why the death of Christ and the remission of men's sins are so constantly represented as most closely and immediately connected with each

other. This constitutes a very strong presumption in favour of the generally received doctrine upon the subject; but in order to *establish* it thoroughly, it is necessary to examine carefully and minutely the meaning of the specific statements of Scripture which make known to us the nature, objects, and consequences of Christ's death, and the actual connection between it and the forgiveness of sin. And we would now briefly indicate the chief heads under which they may be classed, and some of the principal points to be attended to in the investigation of them.

First, we would notice that there are some important *words*, on the true and proper meaning of which the settlement of this controversy essentially depends, and of which, therefore, the meaning must be carefully investigated, and, if possible, fully ascertained. The words to which I refer are such as these: *atonement*,—used frequently in the Old Testament in connection with the sacrifices, and once (*i.e.*, in our version) in the New Testament; *bearing* and *carrying*, as applied to sin; *propitiation*, *reconciliation*, *redemption*, etc. The words which express these ideas in the original Hebrew or Greek,—such as, *hattath*, *asham*, *kopher*, *nasa*, *sabal*, in Hebrew; and in Greek, *ἰλάω* or *ἰλάσκομαι*, and its derivatives, *ἰλασμός* and *ἰλαστήριον*, *καταλλάσσω* and *καταλλαγή*, *ἀγοράζω*, *λυτρόω*, *λύτρον*, *ἀντίλυτρον*, *φέρω*, and *ἀναφέρω*,—have all been subjected to a thorough critical investigation in the course of this controversy; and no one can be regarded as well versant in its merits, and able to defend the views which he has been led to adopt, unless he has examined the meaning of these words, and can give some account of the philological grounds on which his conclusions, as to their import, are founded. Under this head may be also comprehended the different Greek prepositions which are commonly translated in our version by the word *for*, in those statements in which Christ is represented as dying *for* sins, and dying *for* sinners,—*viz.*, *διὰ*, *περί*, *ὑπέρ*, and *ἀντί*,—for much manifestly depends upon their true import.

The object to be aimed at in the investigation of these words is, of course, to ascertain, by a diligent and careful application of the right rules and materials, what is their natural, obvious, ordinary import, as used by the sacred writers,—what sense they were fitted, and must therefore have been intended, to convey to those to whom they were originally addressed. It can scarcely be disputed that these words, in their obvious and ordinary meaning,



being applied to the death of Christ, decidedly support the generally received doctrine of the atonement; and the substance of what Socinians, and other opponents of the doctrine, usually labour to establish in regard to them is, that there are some grounds for maintaining that *they may* bear, because they *sometimes must bear*, a different sense,—a sense in which they could not sanction the doctrine of the atonement; so that the points to be attended to in this department of the discussion are these: First, to scrutinize the evidence adduced, that the particular word under consideration must sometimes be taken in a different sense from that which it ordinarily bears; secondly, to see whether, in the passages in which, if taken in its ordinary sense, it would sanction the doctrine of the atonement, there be any necessity, or even warrant, for departing from this ordinary meaning. The proof of a negative upon *either* of these two points is quite sufficient to overturn the Socinian argument, and to leave the passages standing in full force as proofs of the orthodox doctrine; while, in regard to many of the most important passages, the defenders of that doctrine have not only proved a negative upon these two questions,—that is, upon one or other of them,—but have further established, thirdly, that, upon strictly critical grounds, the ordinary meaning of the word is *that* which ought to be there adopted.

But we must proceed to consider and classify statements, as distinguished from mere words, though these words enter into most of the important statements upon the subject; and here I would be disposed to place first those passages in which Christ is represented as executing the office of a Priest, and as offering up Himself as a sacrifice. That He is so represented cannot be disputed. The question is, What ideas with respect to the nature, objects, and effects of His death, was this representation intended to convey to us? The New Testament statements concerning the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ are manifestly connected with, are in some sense taken from, and must be in some measure interpreted by, the accounts given of the priesthood and sacrifices under the law, and of the origin and objects of sacrifices generally,—in so far as they can be regarded as affording any indication of the principles which regulate the divine procedure with respect to the forgiveness of sin. This opens up a wide and interesting field of discussion,—historical and critical,—comprehending not only all that we learn from Scripture upon the subject, but likewise anything to be gathered

from the universal prevalence of sacrifices among heathen nations, and the notions which mankind have generally associated with them.

The substance of what is usually contended for upon this topic by Socinians and other opponents of the doctrine of the atonement is this,—that animal sacrifices were *not* originally appointed and required by God, but were devised and invented by men,—that they were natural and appropriate expressions of men's sense of their dependence upon God, their unworthiness of His mercies, their penitence for their sins, and their obligations to Him for His goodness; but that they were not generally understood to involve or imply any idea of substitution or satisfaction,—of propitiating God, and of expiating or atoning for sin: that they were introduced by God into the Mosaic economy, because of their general prevalence, and their capacity of being applied to some useful purposes of instruction; but that no additional ideas were then connected with them beyond what had obtained in substance in heathen nations: that the Levitical sacrifices were not regarded as vicarious and propitiating; and that their influence or effect, such as it was, was confined to ceremonial, and did not extend to moral offences: that the statements in the New Testament in which Christ is represented as officiating as a Priest, and as offering a sacrifice, are mere allusions of a figurative or metaphorical kind to the Levitical sacrifices, employed in accommodation to Jewish notions and habits; and that, more especially, the minute and specific statements upon this subject, contained in the Epistle to the Hebrews, are, as the Improved or Socinian version, published about forty years ago, says, characterized by “far-fetched analogies and inaccurate reasonings.”\* In opposition to all this, the defenders of the doctrine of the atonement generally contend that animal sacrifices were of divine appointment, and were intended by God to symbolize, to represent, and to teach the great principles which regulate His conduct in regard to sin and sinners,—that they expressed a confession of sin on the part of the person by, or for, whom they were offered,—that they indicated the transference of his sin, and the punishment it merited, to the victim offered, the endurance of the punishment by the victim in the room of the offerer,—and, as the result, the exemption of the offerer

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\* “The Improved Version,” p. 544. Ed. 1817.

from the punishment he deserved ; in other words, that they were vicarious, as implying the substitution of one for the other, and expiatory or propitiatory, as implying the oblation and the acceptance of a satisfaction, or compensation, or equivalent for the offence, and, as a consequence, its remission,—that these ideas, though intermingled with much error, are plainly enough exhibited in the notions which prevailed on the subject among heathen nations, and are fully sanctioned by the statements made with respect to the nature, objects, and consequences of the divinely appointed sacrifices of the Mosaic economy ;—that these were evidently vicarious and expiatory,—that they were appointed to be offered chiefly for ceremonial, but also for *some* moral offences, considered as violations of the ceremonial law, though, of course, they could not of themselves really expiate or atone for the moral, but only the ceremonial, guilt of this latter class,—that they really expiated or removed ceremonial offences, or were accepted as a ground or reason for exempting men from the punishment incurred by the violation or neglect of the provisions of the Jewish theocracy, while their bearing upon moral offences could be only symbolical or typical ;—that, in place of the New Testament statements about the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ being merely figurative allusions to the Levitical sacrifices, the whole institution of sacrifices, and the place which they occupied in the Mosaic economy, were regulated and determined by a regard to the one sacrifice of Christ,—that they were intended to direct men's faith to it,—that they embodied and represented the principles on which its efficacy depended, and should therefore be employed in illustrating its true nature and bearings ; while everything to be learned from them, in regard to it, is fitted to impress upon us the conviction, that it was vicarious and expiatory,—that is, presented and accepted in the room and stead of others, and thus effecting or procuring their reconciliation to God, and their exemption from the penal consequences of their sins. All this has been maintained, and all this has been established, by the defenders of the doctrine of the atonement ; and with the principal grounds on which these various positions rest, and on which they can be defended from the objections of adversaries, and from the opposite views taken by them upon these points, all students of Scripture ought to possess some acquaintance. The most important and fundamental of the various topics comprehended in this wide field of discussion,

are involved in the settlement of these two questions,—namely, first, What was the character, object, and immediate effect of the Levitical sacrifices? were they vicarious and expiatory, or not? and, secondly, What is the true relation between the scriptural statements concerning the Levitical sacrifices, and those concerning the sacrifice of Christ? and what light does anything we know concerning the former throw upon the statements concerning the latter? These are questions presenting materials for much interesting discussion; and it is our duty to seek to possess *some* knowledge of the facts and arguments by which they are to be decided.

Secondly, another important class of passages consists of those which bear directly and immediately upon the true nature and the immediate object of Christ's death. There are some general considerations derived from Scripture, to which we have already had occasion to refer, which afford good ground for certain inferences upon this subject. If it was the death, in human nature, of One who was also a possessor of the divine nature, as Scripture plainly teaches, then it must possess a nature, character, and tendency altogether peculiar and extraordinary; and must be fitted, and have been intended, to effect results altogether beyond the range of what could have been accomplished by anything that is competent to any creature,—results directly related to infinity and eternity. If it was the death of One who had no sin of His own, who was perfectly innocent and holy, we are constrained to conclude that it must have been inflicted upon account of the sins of others, whose punishment He agreed to bear. A similar conclusion has been deduced from some of the actual features of Christ's sufferings as described in Scripture, especially from His agony in the garden, and His desertion upon the cross; circumstances which it is not easy to explain, if His sufferings were merely those of a martyr and an exemplar,—and which naturally suggest the propriety of ascribing to them a very different character and object, and are obviously fitted to lead us to conceive of Him as enduring the punishment of sin, inflicted by God, in the execution of the provisions of His holy law.

But the class of passages to which we now refer, are those which contain distinct and specific information as to the real nature, character, and immediate object of His sufferings and death; such as those which assure us that He suffered and died



for sin and for sinners; that He bore our sins, and took them away; that He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; that He suffered for sin, the just for the unjust; that He was made sin for us; that He was made a curse for us, etc. Such statements as these abound in Scripture; and the question is, What ideas are they fitted—and therefore, as we must believe, intended—to convey to us concerning the true nature and character of Christ's death, and its relation to, and bearing upon, our sin, and the forgiveness of it? Now, if we attend to these statements, and, instead of being satisfied with vague and indefinite conceptions of their import, seek to realize their meaning, and to understand distinctly what is their true sense and signification, we must be constrained to conclude that, if they have any meaning, they were intended to impress upon us the convictions—that our sin was the procuring cause of Christ's death, that which rendered His death necessary, and actually brought it about,—that He consented to occupy the place of sinners, and to bear the punishment which they had deserved and incurred,—that, in consequence, their guilt, in the sense of legal answerableness or liability to punishment (*reatus*), was transferred to, and laid on, Him; so that He suffered, in their room and stead, the punishment which they had deserved and incurred, and which, but for His enduring it, they must have suffered in their own persons. And as this is the natural and obvious meaning of the scriptural statements,—that which, as a matter of course, they would convey to any one who would attend to them, and seek to realize clearly and definitely the ideas which they are fitted to express,—so it is just the meaning which, after all the learning, ingenuity, and skill of adversaries have been exerted in obscuring and perverting them, comes out more palpably and certainly than before, as the result of the most searching critical investigation.

Suffering and dying for us means, according to the Socinians, merely suffering and dying on our account, for our good, with a view to our being benefited by it. It is true that Christ died for us in this sense; but this is not the whole of what the scriptural statements upon the subject are fitted to convey. It can be shown that they naturally and properly express the idea that He died in our room and stead, and thus constrain us to admit the conception of His substitution for us, or of His being put in our place, and being made answerable for us. The prepositions translated

for,—when persons, *we* or *sinner*s, are the objects of the relation indicated,—are *διὰ*, *ὑπέρ*, and *ἀντί*. Now, it is admitted that *διὰ* naturally and properly means, on our account, or for our benefit, and does not of itself suggest anything else. It is admitted, further, that *ὑπέρ* may mean, on our account, as well as in our room, though the latter is its more ordinary signification,—that which it most readily suggests,—and that which, in many cases, the connection shows to be the only one that is admissible. But it is contended that *ἀντί*, which is also employed for this purpose, means, and can mean only, in this connection, instead of, or in the room of, as denoting the substitution of one party in place of another. This does not warrant us in holding that, wherever *διὰ* and *ὑπέρ* are employed, they, too, must imply substitution of one for another, since it is also true that Christ died for our benefit, or on our account; but it does warrant us to assert that the ordinary meaning of *διὰ*, and the meaning which may sometimes be assigned to *ὑπέρ*,—namely, on account of,—does not bring out the whole of what the Scripture teaches with respect to the relation subsisting between the death of Christ and those for whose benefit it was intended.

The prepositions employed when sins, and not persons, are represented as the causes or objects of Christ's suffering or dying, are *διὰ*, *ὑπέρ*, and *περί*; and it is contended and proved, that, according to Scripture, what the proper ordinary meaning of dying for or on account of sin,—*διὰ*, *ὑπέρ*, *περί*, *ἁμαρτιαν*, or *ἁμαρτίας*,—is this,—that the sin spoken of was that which procured and merited the death, so that the death was a penal infliction on account of the sin which caused it, or for which it was endured.\* Bearing or carrying sin, it can be proved, has, for its ordinary meaning in Scripture, being made, or becoming legally answerable for sin, and, in consequence, enduring its punishment. There are, indeed, some other words used in Scripture in regard to this matter, which are somewhat more indeterminate in their meaning, and cannot be proved of themselves to import more than the Socinian sense of bearing sin,—namely, taking it away, or generally removing it and its consequences, such as *nasa* in the Old Testament, and *αἶρω* in the New; but *sabal* in the Old Testament, and *φέρω* or

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\* The impulsive or meritorious and | c.i.; Stillingfleet on Christ's Satisfac-  
final cause. See Grotius, De Satisfact., | tion.

*ἀναφέρω* in the New, have no such indefiniteness of meaning. They include, indeed, the idea of taking away or removing, which the Socinians regard as the whole of their import; but it can be proved that their proper meaning is to bear or carry, and thus *by bearing or carrying*, to remove or take away. As to the statements, that Christ was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, that He was made sin and made a curse for us, and others of similar import, there is really nothing adduced, possessed even of plausibility, against their having the meaning which they naturally and properly convey,—namely, that our liability to punishment for sin was transferred to Him, and that He, in consequence, endured in our room and stead what we had deserved and incurred.

Thirdly, The third and last class of passages consists of those which describe the effects or results of Christ's death,—the consequences which have flowed from it to men in their relation to God, and to His law, which they had broken. These may be said to be, chiefly, so far as our present subject is concerned, reconciliation to God,—the expiation of sin,—and the redemption of sinners,—*καταλλαγή, ἵλασμός, λύτρωσις*. These are all ascribed in Scripture to the death of Christ; and there are two questions that naturally arise to be discussed in regard to them, though, in the very brief remarks we can make upon them, the two questions may be answered together: First, What do they mean? or what is the nature of the changes effected upon men's condition which they express? Secondly, What light is cast by the nature of these changes or effects, when once ascertained, upon the true character of the death of Christ,—and more especially upon the great question, whether or not it was endured in our room and stead, and thus made satisfaction for our sins?

Reconciliation naturally and ordinarily implies that two parties, who were formerly at variance and enmity with each other, have been brought into a state of harmony and friendship; and if this reconciliation between God and man was effected, as Scripture assures us it was, by the death of Christ, then the fair inference would seem to be, that His death had removed obstacles which previously stood in the way of the existence or the manifestation of friendship between them,—had made it, in some way or other, fully accordant with the principles, the interests, or the inclinations of both parties to return to a state of friendly intercourse. We

need not repeat, in order to guard against misconstruction, what was formerly explained,—in considering objections to the doctrine of the atonement founded on misrepresentations about the eternal and unchangeable love of God to men,—about the atonement being the consequence and not the cause of God's love, and about its introducing no feeling into the divine mind which did not exist there before. If this be true, as it certainly is, and if it be also true that the death of Christ is represented as propitiating God to men,—as turning away His wrath from them,—and as effecting their restoration to His favour,—then it follows plainly that it must have removed obstacles to the manifestation of His love, and opened up a channel for His actual bestowing upon them tokens of His kindness; and if these obstacles consisted in the necessity of exercising and manifesting His justice, and maintaining unimpaired the honour of His law, which men had broken, then the way or manner in which the death of Christ operated in effecting a reconciliation between God and man, *must have been* by its satisfying God's justice, and answering the demands of His law. Socinians, indeed, allege that it is not said in Scripture that God was reconciled to men by the death of Christ, but only that men were reconciled to God, or that God in this way reconciled men to Himself; and that the only way in which the death of Christ operated in effecting this reconciliation, was by its affording motives and encouragements to men to repent and turn to Him. It is admitted that it is not expressly said in Scripture that the death of Christ reconciled God to men; but then it is contended, and can be easily proved, that statements of equivalent import to this occur; and more especially, that it is in accordance with Scripture usage, in the application of the word *reconcile*, that those who are said to be reconciled, are represented, not as laying aside their enmity against the other party, but as aiming at and succeeding in getting Him to lay aside His righteous enmity against them; and this general use of the word, applied to the case under consideration, leaves the argument for a real atonement, deduced from the asserted effect of Christ's death upon the reconciliation of God and man untouched, in all its strength and cogency.

The next leading effect ascribed to the death of Christ is that it expiates sin, as expressed by the word *ἰλάσκειν*, and its derivatives. The statements in which these words occur, bring out somewhat more explicitly the effect of Christ's sufferings and



death upon men's relation to God and to his law, and thus at once confirm and illustrate what is said about its bearing upon reconciliation. It can be fully established, that the true and proper meaning of these words is, to propitiate, or to make propitious one who had been righteously offended by transgression, so that the transgression is no longer regarded as a reason for manifesting displeasure or inflicting punishment. Christ is repeatedly\* described in Scripture as being a propitiation for sins, *ἰλασμός περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν*; and we are also told that His humiliation and His execution of the priestly office were directed to the object of making propitiation for, or expiating the sins of, the people,—*εἰς τὸ ἰλάσκεσθαι τὰς ἁμαρτίας*.† This is translated in our version, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people; but it would be more correctly rendered, to propitiate by expiating their sins. And in another passage,‡ where He is also described as a propitiation,—*ἰλαστήριον*,—this is expressly connected with His blood as an object of faith, and with the result of the remission of sins; it being a great principle regulating God's dealings with sinners, that without the shedding of blood there is no remission. If Christ was thus a propitiation, or propitiated God to men who had sinned against Him, and if He effected this through His humiliation and blood-shedding, it could be only by its being an atonement for their sins, or expiatory of their sins,—that is, by its presenting or affording some adequate cause or reason why the punishment of their sins should not be inflicted upon them; and *this*, according to every idea suggested in Scripture concerning expiation or atonement, or expiatory sacrifices,—sacrifices which, as is often said in the Old Testament, make atonement,—could be only by its being the endurance in their room and stead of the punishment they had incurred.

The general ideas expressed by some of these leading words, as descriptive of the effect of Christ's death upon men's condition and relation to God, are well stated by Dr John Pye Smith in this way: In enumerating the glorious effects of Christ's sacrifice, he specifies as one, "The legal *reconciliation* of God and all sinners who cordially receive the gospel method of salvation;" and then he adds, "This all-important idea is presented under two aspects: First, *Expiation* or *atonement*. This denotes the doing of some-

\* 1 John ii. 2; iv. 10.

† Heb. ii. 17.

‡ Rom. iii. 25.

thing which shall furnish a *just ground* or *reason* in a system of judicial administration, for *pardon*ing a convicted offender. Secondly, *Propitiation*: anything which shall have the property of disposing, inclining, or causing the judicial authority to *admit* the expiation; that is, to assent to it as a valid reason for pardon-ing the offender."\*

The third leading result ascribed to Christ's death, in its bearing upon the condition of sinners in relation to God and His law, is redemption,—*λύτρωσις*, or *απολύτρωσις*. As we are assured in Scripture, both that Christ died *for* sins and that He died *for* sinners, so we are told, both that sins and sinners were redeemed by Him, by His blood, by His giving Himself for them; though the idea most frequently indicated is, that, by dying for sinners, He redeemed or purchased *them*. He is described as giving His life,—which, of course, is the same thing as His submitting to death,—as a *λύτρον*, and as giving Himself as an *αντίλυτρον* for men. Now, there is no doubt about the true, proper, ordinary meaning of these words: *λύτρον* means a ransom price,—a price paid in order to secure the deliverance of a debtor or a captive; and *αντίλυτρον* means the same thing, with a more explicit indication,—the effect of the prefixed preposition,—of the idea of commutation, compensation, or substitution,—that is, of the price being paid in the room and stead of something else for which it is substituted. Christ's blood or death, then, is frequently and explicitly represented in Scripture as a ransom price paid by Him, in order to effect, and actually effecting, the deliverance of men from sin, and from the injurious effects of sin upon their relation to God and their eternal welfare. And if there be any truth or reality in this representation,—if anything is meant by it at all corresponding to the words in which it is conveyed to us, then it is manifest that, taken in connection with what we know from Scripture as to men's natural state or condition, and the real nature of the difficulties or obstacles that stood in the way of their deliverance, it shuts us up to the conclusion that Christ, in suffering and dying, acted in the room and stead of sinners; and by enduring, as their substitute, the punishment which they had deserved, rendered satisfaction to the justice and law of God in their behalf.

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\* Four Discourses; Dis. ii., pp. 136-7. . Ed. 1828.

These, then, are the leading divisions under which the extensive and varied mass of Scripture evidence for the great doctrine of the atonement may be classed: first, the general character of Christ's sufferings and death, as being the offering up of Himself as a sacrifice; secondly, the true nature and immediate object of His death, as implying that He took the place of sinners, and in all His sufferings endured the punishment which they had merited; and, thirdly and finally, the bearing or effect of His death upon their relation to God and His law,—every feature and aspect of the resulting effect, or of the change produced, affording a strong confirmation of His having acted as their substitute, and rendered satisfaction to divine justice for their sins.

*Sec. VI.—Socinian View of the Atonement.*

Every position laid down by the defenders of the doctrine has been controverted, and every one of them has been successfully established. It is necessary to know something, not only of the grounds of the leading scriptural positions on which this great doctrine is based, but also of the objections by which they have been assailed, and of the way in which these objections have been answered. There are, however, two or three general observations on the method commonly adopted by the Socinians in dealing with the Scripture evidence in reference to this doctrine, which it may be worth while to bring under notice.

Of course they feel it to be necessary to attempt to explain, in consistency with the denial of the atonement, the special importance ascribed in Scripture to the death of Christ, as distinguished from everything else recorded regarding Him, and the peculiarity and immediateness of the connection plainly indicated between His death and the forgiveness of men's sins. Now, the substance of what they allege upon this point really amounts to this, and to nothing more,—that though, in reality, no such special importance attached to the death of Christ, and no such peculiar and immediate connection subsisted between it and the forgiveness of sin, as the doctrine of an atonement supposes, yet that reasons can be assigned why the sacred writers might naturally enough have been led to speak of it in a way that is fitted, at first sight, to convey these impressions. This is no misrepresentation of their doctrine, but a fair statement of what it involves, as could very easily

be established. Of course they are fond of enlarging upon the advantages resulting from Christ's death as an example of excellence in Him, and of love to men, and as confirming the divinity of His mission and the truth of His doctrines; while they usually come at last, in discussing this point, to the admission, that the main ground why such special importance is assigned to it in Scripture is, because it was necessary as a step to His resurrection, which was intended to be the great proof of the divinity of His mission, and thus the main ground of our faith or reliance upon what He has made known to us,—a train of thought which assumes throughout, what may be regarded as the fundamental principle of Socinianism,—namely, that the sole object of Christ's mission was to reveal and establish the will of God.

We have no interest and no inclination to underrate the importance of the death of Christ, either in itself, or as connected with His resurrection, viewed as a testimony to truth,—as a ground of faith or conviction; but we cannot admit that any view of this sort accounts fully for the very special and paramount importance which the Scripture everywhere assigns to it, and still less for the peculiar and immediate connection which it everywhere indicates as subsisting between the suffering, the death, the bloodshedding of Christ, and the forgiveness of men's sins. Dr Lant Carpenter, one of the most respectable, and, upon the whole, most candid and least offensive of modern Unitarians, after enumerating a variety of circumstances in the condition of the apostles, and in the sentiments and associations it tended to produce, which might not unnaturally have led them to represent the connection between the death of Christ and the forgiveness of sin as peculiar and immediate, though it was not so (for that is really the substance of the matter), triumphantly asks, "Can we wonder that the apostles sometimes referred to this event all the blessings of the gospel, and represented it under those figures with which their religious and national peculiarities so abundantly supplied them?"\* The Unitarian position, then, upon this point, is this: Though the apostles sometimes represented the connection subsisting between the death of Christ and the blessings of salvation as peculiar and

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\* "Unitarianism the Doctrine of the Gospel, or a View of the Scriptural Grounds of Unitarianism," second edition (1811), P. iii., c. viii., pp. 306, 307.



immediate, we do not believe that any such peculiar and immediate connection existed; *because* we can imagine some circumstances and influences that might not improbably have led them to speak in this way, without supposing that they really believed or meant to teach the existence of such a connection. *Our* position is this: The apostles speak of the sufferings and death of Christ, and of the blessings of salvation, in such a way as is fitted, and was therefore intended, to teach us that the connection between them was peculiar and immediate, and not indirect and remote, through the intervention of the efficacy of His sufferings and death, in establishing truths and influencing our motives; and therefore we believe this upon their authority. It is surely manifest, that the only honest way of coming to a decision between these two positions, is to take up and settle the previous question,—namely, whether or not the apostles were directly commissioned to reveal the will of God? whether or not the Bible is to be received as our rule of faith?

This leads us to notice the liberal use which the Socinians make,—in distorting and perverting the statements of Scripture upon this subject,—of the allegation, that the language employed by the sacred writers is very figurative, and is not to be literally understood. This is an allegation which they make and apply very largely in their whole system of scriptural interpretation; but in regard to no subject do they make so wide and sweeping a use of it, as in dealing with the doctrine of the atonement, and more especially when they come to assail what they call “the far-fetched analogies and inaccurate reasonings” of the Epistle to the Hebrews. This topic opens up a wide field of general discussion, on which we do not mean to enter. We notice merely the abuse which they make of it, in order to guard against the impression which they labour to convey, though they do not venture formally and openly to maintain it,—namely, that an allegation that a statement is figurative or metaphorical, if admitted or proved to be in any sense or to any extent true, virtually involves in total obscurity or uncertainty the meaning or import it was intended to convey. This is really the substance of what they must maintain, in order to make their favourite allegation of any real service to their cause.

A great portion of ordinary language may be said to be in some sense figurative; and one cause of this is, that most of the words employed to describe mental states or operations are taken

from material objects. But this does not prevent the language, though figurative or metaphorical, from conveying to us precise and definite ideas.\* Figures are, for the most part, taken from actual resemblances or analogies; and even when the figurative use of words and phrases has not been fully established, and cannot, in consequence, be directly ascertained by the ordinary *usus loquendi* (though, in most languages, this is not to any considerable extent the case), still the resemblances and analogies on which the figure is founded may usually be traced, and thus the idea intended to be conveyed may be distinctly apprehended,—due care, of course, being taken to apply aright any information we may possess concerning the real nature of the subject and its actual qualities and relations. Christ is described as the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world. There is no doubt something figurative here; but there can be no doubt also that it was intended, as it is fitted, to convey to us the ideas that there is some resemblance between Christ and a lamb, and a lamb, moreover, viewed as a sacrificial victim; and that Christ exerted some influence upon the remission of the sins of men analogous to that which the sacrifice of a lamb exerted in regard to the remission of the sins to which such sacrifices had a respect. What this influence or relation in both cases was, must be learned from a fair application of all that we know concerning the nature of the case in both instances, and the specific information we have received regarding them. And the fair result of a careful and impartial examination of all the evidence bearing upon these points is this, that the language of Scripture is fitted to impress upon us the convictions,—that the sacrifice of a lamb under the Mosaic economy was really vicarious, and was really expiatory of the sins to which it had a respect,—and that the sacrifice of Christ, in like manner, was really vicarious; that is, that it was presented in the room and stead of men, and that it really expiated or atoned for their sins,—that it was offered and accepted, as furnishing an adequate ground or reason why their sins should not be punished as they had deserved.

There is a great deal said in Scripture about the sufferings and death of Christ, and their relations,—viewed both in their causes and their consequences,—to men's sins. This language is partly

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\* Watson's Institutes, P. ii., c. xxi. Works, vol. xi., p. 87.

figurative; but, *first*, there is no proof or evidence that it is wholly so; and, *secondly*, there is no great difficulty in ascertaining, with precision and certainty, what ideas the figures, that are employed in representing and illustrating them, are fitted, and were intended, to convey. And if the statements of Scripture upon this point, viewed in combination and as a whole, were not intended to convey to us the ideas that Christ, by His sufferings and death, offered a true and real sacrifice,—that He presented it in the room and stead of men, and by doing so, suffered the punishment which they had deserved, and thereby expiated their guilt, and saved them from punishment,—then the Bible can be regarded in no other light than as a series of unintelligible riddles, fitted not to instruct, but to perplex and to mock, men.\* Here, as in the case of other doctrines, Socinians argue with some plausibility only when they are dealing with single passages, or particular classes of passages, but keeping out of view, or throwing into the background, the general mass of Scripture evidence bearing upon the whole subject. When we take a conjunct view of the whole body of Scripture statements, manifestly intended to make known to us the nature, causes, and consequences of Christ's death, literal and figurative,—view them in combination with each other,—and fairly estimate what they are fitted to teach, there is no good ground for doubt as to the general conclusions which we should feel ourselves constrained to adopt.

The evidence in support of the expiatory and vicarious character of Christ's death, is not only peculiarly varied and abundant; but we have, in this case, peculiar advantages for ascertaining the truth as to its intended import, in the special means we possess of knowing how the statements of the apostles would be, in point of fact, understood by those to whom they were originally addressed. We must, of course, believe that the apostles used language fitted and intended to be understood by those whom they addressed,—not accommodated to their errors and prejudices, in accordance with what is usually called the theory of accommodation; for this, integrity, not to speak of inspiration, precludes,—but fitted to convey *correct* impressions, if understood in the sense in which they must have known that it would be understood,—for this integrity requires. And it can be easily proved that

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\* Hodges' Sermon on the Nature of the Atonement; Spruce Street Lectures, pp. 159, 160.

both the Jews and the Gentiles, with the notions they generally entertained about sacrifices,—their nature, object, and effects,—must have understood the apostolic statements about Christ's sacrifice of Himself, just as they have been generally understood ever since by the great body of the Christian church. It is, then, a mere evasion of the argument, to dispose of such a body of proof by the vague allegation of the language being figurative or metaphorical, as if it could be shown that all the scriptural statements upon the subject are figurative; and, further, that the figures employed convey no meaning whatever,—or a meaning which cannot be fully ascertained,—or a meaning different from that assigned to them by the defenders of the atonement. Not only can none of these positions be proved, but all of them can be disproved; and, therefore, the evidence for this great and fundamental doctrine stands untouched and unassailable.\*

There is only one of the more specific methods adopted by Socinians to evade and pervert the testimony of Scripture upon this subject to which I shall particularly advert; but it is one of pretty extensive application. It may be described, in general, as consisting in this,—that they labour to show that most of the scriptural statements about the sufferings and death of Christ are descriptive merely of certain *results*, without indicating anything of the *means*, or *intermediate process*, by which the results are effected. This will be best understood by giving two or three examples. With reference to the connection between the sin of man and the death of Christ, in its causes, they usually maintain that sin was only the final cause of Christ's death,—in no proper sense its impulsive, procuring cause, and in no sense whatever its meritorious cause. By sin being the final cause of Christ's death, they mean that it was the *end* or object of His death to save men from sin,—which is certainly true; but then they deny that we have any *further* information given us in Scripture respecting any causal connection between our sin and Christ's death; while we contend that the scriptural representations warrant us in asserting, not only that Christ died in order to save men from sin, but, further, that man's sin was the procuring cause of His death,—that which rendered His death necessary, and really brought it

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\* Dr Owen on the Trinity and Satisfaction. Works, vol. x., p. 532. (Russell's Edition.)



to pass,—and did so by meriting or deserving that we should die. Christ's dying for sinners, according to the Socinians, means merely His dying for their sakes, on their account,—for their good,—in order to benefit them. This we admit to be true,—to be implied in the scriptural statements upon the subject; but we contend, further, that these statements, in their genuine import, teach that He died in our room and stead, and that by dying in our room and stead as the means, He effected our good as the result. *Bearing sin*, according to the Socinians, means merely taking it away or removing it, and is thus descriptive merely of the result of His interposition,—in that, in consequence, men are not actually subjected to what their sin deserved; whereas we contend that its true and proper meaning is, that He assumed or had laid upon Him the guilt, or legal answerableness, or legal liability to punishment, on account of our sins, and endured this punishment; and that *by thus bearing our sin as a means*, He effected the end or result of bearing it away or removing it, so that it no longer lies upon us, to subject us to punishment. According to our view of the import of the expression, it implies that our sin was *on* Christ,—was laid on Him,—and that thus He bore it, *in order to bear it away*; whereas, on the Socinian interpretation, our sin never was on Him, and He bore it away, or accomplished the result of freeing us from the effects of it, without ever having borne it. Redemption, according to the Socinians, just means deliverance as an end aimed at, and result effected, without indicating anything as to the means by which it was accomplished; and it is not disputed that, in some instances, the word *redeem* is used in this wide and general sense. But we contend that its proper ordinary meaning is to effect deliverance as an *end*, through the *means* of a price or ransom paid; and we undertake to show, not only from the proper ordinary meaning of the word itself,—from which there is no sufficient reason for deviating,—but from the whole connections in which it occurs, and especially the specification of the actual price or ransom paid, that it ought, in its application to the death of Christ, to be understood as descriptive of the means by which the result of deliverance is effected, as well as the actual deliverance itself. Of course, in each case the question as to the true meaning of the statements must be determined by a diligent and impartial application of philological and critical rules and materials; but this

brief statement of these distinctions may perhaps be of some use in explaining the true state of the question upon the Scripture evidence,—in guarding against Socinian sophisms and evasions,—and in indicating what are some of the leading points to be attended to in the investigation of this subject.

*Sec. VII.—Arminian View of the Atonement.*

In introducing the subject of atonement, I proposed to consider, first, the reality and general nature of the vicarious atonement or satisfaction of Christ, as it has been generally held by the Christian church in opposition to the Socinians; secondly, the peculiarities of the doctrine commonly held by Arminians upon this subject, as connected with the other leading features of their scheme of theology; and, thirdly, the peculiar views of those who hold Calvinistic doctrines upon most other points, but upon this concur with, or approximate to, the views of the Arminians. The first of these topics I have already examined; I now proceed to advert to the second,—namely, the peculiarities of the Arminian doctrine upon the subject of the atonement or satisfaction of Christ. I do not mean, however, to dwell at any great length upon this second head, because most of the topics that might be discussed under it recur again, with some modifications, under the third head; and as they are more dangerous *there*, because of the large amount of truth in connection with which they are held, I propose *then* to consider them somewhat more fully.

The leading peculiarity of the doctrine of the Arminians upon this subject is usually regarded as consisting in this,—that they believe in a universal or unlimited atonement, or teach that Christ died and offered up an expiatory sacrifice for the sins of all men,—that is, of all the individuals of the human race, without distinction or exception. This doctrine was the subject of the second of the five articles,—the first being on predestination,—which were discussed and condemned in the Synod of Dort. Their leading tenets upon this subject, as given in to the Synod of Dort, and condemned there, were these,—first, that the price of redemption, which Christ offered to His Father, is not only in and of itself sufficient for redeeming the whole human race, but that, according to the decree, the will, and the grace of God the Father, it was actually paid for all and every man; and, secondly, that Christ,

by the merit of His death, has so far reconciled God His Father to the whole human race, as that the Father, on account of His merit, was able, consistently with His justice and veracity, and actually willed or resolved, to enter into a new covenant of grace with sinful men exposed to condemnation. Now, these statements, it will be observed, direct our thoughts, not only to the extent, but also to the nature, the objects, and the effects of the atonement, or of the payment of the ransom price of men's deliverance and salvation. Their doctrine upon both these points was also comprehended by themselves in one proposition in this way: "Christ died for all and every man, and did so in this sense and to this effect,—that He obtained, or procured (*impetravit*), for all men by His death reconciliation and the forgiveness of their sins; but upon this condition, that none actually possess and enjoy this forgiveness of sins except believers."\* The substance of the doctrine is this,—first, that Christ's death, in the purpose of God and in His own intention in submitting to it, was directed to the benefit of all men, equally and alike; secondly, that its only proper and direct effect was to enable and incline God to enter into a new covenant with them upon more favourable terms than, but for Christ's dying for them, would have been granted; and that this is virtually the same thing as His procuring or obtaining for all men reconciliation with God and the forgiveness of their sins.

Now, this is plainly a scheme of doctrine which is throughout consistent with itself. And more especially it is manifest, that, if the atonement was universal or unlimited,—if it was intended to benefit all men,—its proper nature and immediate object must have been, in substance, just what the Arminians represent it to have been; or, more generally, the doctrine of the universality of the atonement must materially affect men's views of its nature and immediate object. Arminians generally concur with other sections of the Christian church in maintaining the doctrine of a vicarious and expiatory atonement, in opposition to the Socinians; and of course they defend the general ideas of substitution and satisfaction,—that is, of Christ's having put Himself in our place, and

\* *Acta Synodalia Remonstrantium*, P. ii., p. 280. *Amesii Coronis ad Collationem Hagiensem*, p. 90. Nichols' *Calvinism and Arminianism Compared*, pp. 114, 115. Statement

and Refutation of the Views of Arminius himself upon this subject, in *Witsius, De Œconom. Fœd.*, Lib. ii., c. vii., sec. ix. Owen's *Display of Arminianism*, c. ix. and x.

satisfied divine justice in our room and stead; but when they come more minutely and particularly to explain what substitution and satisfaction mean, and in what way the atonement of Christ is connected with, and bears upon, the forgiveness and salvation of men individually, then differences of no small importance come out between them and those who have more scriptural views of the scheme of divine truth in general, and then is manifested a considerable tendency on their part to dilute or explain away what seems to be the natural import of the terms commonly employed in relation to this matter. It may not be easy to determine whether their doctrine of the universality of the atonement produced their modified and indefinite views of its proper nature and immediate object, or whether certain defective and erroneous views upon this latter point led them to assert its universality. But certain it is, that their doctrine with respect to its nature, and their doctrine with respect to its extent, are intimately connected together,—the one naturally leading to and producing the other. As the doctrine of the universality of the atonement professes to be founded upon, and derived from, Scripture statements directly bearing upon the point, and is certainly not destitute of an *appearance* of Scripture support, the probability is, that *this* was the *πρωτον ψεύδος*,—the primary or originating error,—which produced their erroneous views in regard to the nature and immediate object of the atonement. And this is confirmed by the fact, that the ablest Arminian writers, such as Curcellæus and Limborch,\* have been accustomed to urge the universality of the atonement as a distinct and independent argument against the Calvinistic doctrine of election,—that is, they undertake to prove directly from Scripture that Christ died for all men; and then, having proved this, they draw from it the inference that it was impossible that there could have been from eternity an election of some men to life, and a reprobation, or preterition, or passing by of others,—an argument which, it appears to me, the Calvinistic defenders of an unlimited atonement are not well able to grapple with.

But whatever may have been the state of this matter historically, it is quite plain that there is, and must be, a very close connection between men's views with regard to the nature and immediate object

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\* Curcellæi Instit. Relig. Christ., Lib. vi., c. iv., pp. 356, 357. Lim- | borch, Theologia Christiana, Lib. iv., c. iii., p. 318.



and effect, and with regard to the extent, of the atonement. If Christ died and gave Himself for those who, in point of fact, are never pardoned, sanctified, and saved, the object and immediate effects of His submitting to death must be very different from what they at least may be, if His sacrifice was offered and accepted only for those who are ultimately saved. The nature of His sacrifice, and the whole of the relation in which it stands to spiritual blessings and eternal life, must, in the one case, be essentially different from what it *may* be in the other. We think it of some importance to illustrate this position; and therefore,—reserving the consideration of the alleged universality of the atonement, as a distinct and independent topic, till we come to the third head of our proposed division of the whole subject,—we will now attempt to explain some of the peculiar views, usually held more or less explicitly by Arminians, in regard to the nature, object, and immediate effects of the atonement, *as illustrative of the tendency and results of their doctrine of its universality*; remarking, however, that a very considerable difference of sentiment upon this subject,—and, indeed, in regard to some other fundamental doctrines of Christianity, such as original sin and regeneration by the Holy Spirit,—prevails among those who may be classed under the general head of Arminians, *because* they all deny what are called the peculiarities of Calvinism; and that the representations about to be made apply, in their full extent, only to the more Pelagian Arminians.

First, it is very common among Arminians to deny what orthodox divines have generally contended for, as we have explained, under the head of the necessity of an atonement. The reason of this must be sufficiently manifest from what has already been said upon this subject, especially in illustrating the connection between the necessity of an atonement, and its true nature, as implying substitution and satisfaction. If an atonement was not necessary, because God's perfections, moral government, and law required it as a preliminary to pardon or forgiveness, *then any provision*—no matter what might be its proper nature and peculiar character—might serve the purpose, might be sufficient for accomplishing the intended object; and, of course, substitution and satisfaction might not be required, excepting only in some very vague and indefinite sense, that might admit to a large extent of being modified or explained away. Still Arminians commonly admit, in a general sense, what the Socinians deny,—namely,

that the divine perfections, government, and law did interpose obstacles in the way of the forgiveness and acceptance of sinners, and that these obstacles the atonement of Christ has removed or taken out of the way; while some of them maintain the necessity of an atonement upon grounds similar to those laid down by orthodox divines. Secondly, many Arminians deny that Christ's sufferings and death were a properly penal infliction, and that He endured the penalty due to men's sins; or, at least, have great scruples about the propriety of describing it by this language. They admit, of course, that He *suffered something in our room and stead*, and if they did not, they would wholly concur with the Socinians; but they commonly, at least in modern times, deny either, first, that what He suffered was properly punishment, or, secondly, that it was the same as, or equivalent to, the penalty which men had deserved by their transgressions. These notions plainly indicate a disposition to modify and explain away the real import of scriptural statements, and involve a descent to the very borders of Socinianism. If Christ suffered at all as our substitute,—if He suffered in our room and stead,—then it is manifest that, as He had no sin of His own for which to suffer, His suffering must have been penal; that is, it must have been inflicted judicially, in the execution of the provisions of a law which demanded punishment against men's sins. And, as we formerly explained, it is mere trifling to attempt, as is often done, to settle this question about the penalty of Christ's sufferings, by laying down beforehand a definition of punishment, which includes in it, as a constituent element, personal demerit, or a consciousness of personal demerit, on the part of the individual suffering.

The most important question, however, connected with this department of the subject, is not whether what Christ suffered was a punishment, or properly penal, but whether it was *the penalty* which the law had denounced against sin, and to which sinners, therefore, are justly exposed. Now, upon this point there are *three* different modes of statement which have been adopted and defended by different classes of divines, who all concur in maintaining the doctrine of the atonement against the Socinians. Some contend that the only accurate and exact way of expressing and embodying the doctrine of Scripture upon the subject, is to say, that Christ suffered the very penalty—the same thing viewed legally and judicially—which the law had denounced against sin,

and which we had incurred by transgression. Others think that the full import of the Scripture doctrine is expressed, and that the general scope and spirit of its statements upon this subject are more accurately conveyed, by maintaining that Christ did not suffer the very penalty,—the same penalty which sinners had incurred,—but that He suffered what was a full equivalent, or an adequate compensation for it,—that His suffering was virtually as much as men deserved, though not the same. While others, again, object to both these statements, and think that the whole of what Scripture teaches upon this point is embodied in the position, that what Christ suffered was a substitute for the penalty which we had incurred.

Dr Owen zealously contends for the first of these positions, and attaches much importance to the distinction between Christ having suffered or paid the same penalty as we had incurred, and His having suffered or paid only an equivalent, or as much as we had deserved; or, as he expresses it, between His suffering or paying the *idem* and the *tantundem*. He lays down the doctrine which he maintained upon this point against Grotius and Baxter in this way: “That the punishment which our Saviour underwent was the same that the law required of us; God relaxing His law as to the persons suffering, but not as to the penalty suffered.”\* There are, however, divines of the strictest orthodoxy, and of the highest eminence, who have not attached the same importance to the distinction between the *idem* and the *tantundem*, and who have thought that the true import of the Scripture doctrine upon the subject is most correctly brought out by saying, that what Christ suffered was a *full* equivalent, or an adequate compensation, for the penalty men had incurred. Mastricht, for instance, whose system of theology is eminently distinguished for its ability, clearness, and accuracy, formally argues against the death of Christ being solutio “*proprie sic dicta, quâ id præcisè præstatur, quod est in obligatione;*”† and contends that “*reatus tollitur satisfactione, quâ non idem præcisè, quod est in obligatione, creditori præstatur; sed tantundem, seu æquivalens.*” And Turretine‡ seems, upon the whole, to agree with him, or rather, to conjoin the two

\* Works (Russell's edition), vol. v., p. 594.

† Mastricht, *Theoretico - Practica*

*Theologia*, Lib. v., c. xviii., pp. 613, 614, 615, 616, 625.

‡ Turretin. *de Satisfactione*, Pars. ix., sec. iii.

ideas together, as being both true, though in somewhat different respects, and as not essentially differing from each other. He has not, indeed, so far as I remember, formally discussed the precise question about the *idem* and the *tantundem*, on which Owen and Mastricht have taken opposite sides; but in discussing the Socinian argument,—that Christ did not make a true and real satisfaction for our sins, because He did not in fact pay what was due to God by us, and especially because He suffered only temporal, while we had incurred eternal, death,—he meets the major proposition by asserting that there might be a true and proper satisfaction, though the same thing was not paid which was due, *provided* it was a full equivalent in weight and value, “*etsi non idem, modo tantundem habeatur, sufficit;*” while he meets also the minor proposition of the Socinian argument, by asserting that Christ *did* pay what was due by us; *the same*, not of course in its adjuncts and circumstances, but in its substance,—His suffering, though temporary in duration, being, because of the infinite dignity of His person, properly infinite in weight or value as a penal infliction, and thus substantially identical, in the eye of justice and law, with the eternal punishment which sinners had deserved.

The difference, then, between the *idem* and the *tantundem* in this matter does not seem to be quite so important as Dr Owen believed. The difference between the temporary suffering of one being and the eternal sufferings of millions of other beings, is so great, as to their outward aspects and adjuncts, or accompanying circumstances, as to make it not very unreasonable that men should hesitate about calling them the same thing. And the Scripture doctrine of the substitution and satisfaction of Christ seems to be fully brought out, if His death be represented as a *full* equivalent or an adequate compensation for the sins of men,—as being not only a penal infliction, but an infliction of such weight and value intrinsically, as to be a real and full compliance with the demands of the law denouncing death against sin; and thus to exhaust in substance the position which Scripture plainly teaches,—namely, that He bore our sins,—that is, that He suffered *the* punishment which we had deserved, and must otherwise have borne. The danger of admitting that Christ suffered the *tantundem*, and not the *idem*,—an equivalent or compensation, and not the same thing which we had deserved,—lies here, that men are very apt to dilute or explain away the idea of equivalency or com-



penation, and to reduce it to anything or nothing; and experience has fully illustrated this tendency. The sounder Arminians have usually admitted that Christ's death was an equivalent or compensation for men's sins; but they have generally scrupled, or refused, to call it a *full* equivalent,—an adequate compensation. The reason of this is obvious enough: for this latter idea naturally suggests, that it must be certainly effectual for all its intended objects,—that it must be part of a great scheme, fitted and designed to accomplish certain definite results; whereas, under the more vague and general idea of mere equivalency or compensation, which may be understood in a very wide sense, they can, with some plausibility, retain their notions of its universality, its indefiniteness, and its unsettled and uncertain application. Accordingly, in modern times, they have usually rejected even the idea of equivalency in any proper sense, and adopted the third of the positions formerly mentioned,—namely, that Christ neither suffered the same penalty which we had deserved, nor what was an equivalent for it, but merely what was a substitute for the penalty. This idea leaves them abundant scope for diluting or attenuating, to any extent, the substitution and satisfaction which they still continue, in words, to ascribe to Christ. And, accordingly, it is usually adopted by most of those, in our own day,—whether Arminians or professing Calvinists in other respects,—who hold the doctrine of a universal or unlimited atonement.

The word *equivalent*, when honestly used, naturally suggested the idea, not indeed of precise identity, but still of substantial sameness, at least of adequacy or competency, *when tried by some definite and understood standard*, to serve the same purposes, or to effect the same objects; whereas a substitute for the penalty may be almost anything whatever. A substitute may, indeed, be an equivalent, even a full equivalent, or anything short of, or different from, what is precisely identical; but it may also and equally describe something of which nothing like equivalency or substantial identity can be predicated. And hence the danger, to which I formerly referred, as apprehended by Dr Owen and others, of departing from the idea and the phraseology of strict and precise identity. If it was not the same thing, it must have been a substitute for it; and as even a full equivalent, which implies substantial identity, may be classed under the general name of substitute, men's ideas are thus gradually and imperceptibly

lowered, until at length, by the dexterous use of vague and indefinite language, they are cheated out of very distinct and definite conceptions of the real nature of Christ's death, in its relation to the law which they had broken, and which He magnified and made honourable by fulfilling all its demands,—being made a curse, in our room, that He might redeem us from the curse of the law.

This idea of Christ having suffered, not the penalty we had deserved and incurred, nor an equivalent for it, but merely a substitute for it,—that is, anything which God might choose to accept instead of it, *without there being any standard by which its adequacy for its professed object could be tried or tested*,—has been much dwelt upon, in the present day, by the advocates of a universal atonement, even among those who disclaim Arminianism in other respects. It is, however, an Arminian notion; nay, it is disclaimed by many of the sounder Arminians, and has been generally and justly regarded by Calvinists as amounting to what is practically little else than a denial of the atonement altogether. Limborch, in explaining the doctrine of the old Arminians upon this subject, which he represents as the golden mean between the Socinian and the Calvinistic views, makes the difference between them to consist chiefly in this, that Calvinists represented Christ as suffering the same penalty which men had deserved, or a full equivalent for it, which, of course, implies substantial sameness; while Arminians regarded Him as merely suffering *something or other for them*, which might serve as a substitute for the penalty, and might stand “*vice pœnæ*,” as he says, in the room or stead of the penalty. He felt, however, that this might very probably be regarded as amounting to a virtual denial that Christ had suffered, or been punished, in our room, and thus as approximating to Socinianism; and, accordingly, he proposes this objection to his own doctrine, and answers it, “*An non ergo nostro loco punitus est?*” And his answer is this, “*Eadem quam nos meriti eramus specie pœnæ non punitum esse jam ostendinius*,”—a statement plainly implying an admission of what indeed is manifestly undeniable,—namely, that the natural, obvious meaning of His suffering punishment in our room is, that He endured, either literally and precisely, or at least substantially and equivalently, the penalty which we had incurred; and that *this* must be held to be its meaning, unless it could be proved, as he professed it had been, to be false. And then he adds, “*Potest tamen certo sensu pro nobis dici punitus, quatenus*

pœnam vicariam, pro beneplacito divino sibi imponendam, hoc est, afflictionem, quæ pœnæ vicem sustinuit, in se suscepit.\* This sense of *pœna vicaria*,—as meaning, not a punishment endured in the room and stead of others who had deserved it, but merely suffering endured, *vice pœnæ*, in the room of punishment, or as a substitute for the penalty,—is fully adopted by the modern defenders of universal atonement, Beman, Jenkyn, etc.†

We insist, of course, that the Scripture statements about the connection between our sin and our pardon on the one hand, and the death of Christ on the other, are not fully accounted for,—are not sufficiently explained and exhausted,—by the position that Christ suffered something, which might be called a substitute for the penalty, and which God might choose to accept instead of it; and that they are to be taken in what Limborch, by plain implication, admits, and no one can deny, to be their natural, ordinary meaning, as importing that He had inflicted upon Him, and actually endured, what may be fairly and honestly called the penalty we had deserved and incurred. Limborch rejects this interpretation, because he thinks he has proved that it is not accordant with the facts of the case; that is, that, in fact, Christ did not suffer the penalty which the law had denounced against us. His proofs are these: First, that Christ did not suffer eternal death, which was what we had merited by transgression; and, secondly, that if He had suffered the penalty, or a full equivalent, in our room, there would be no grace or gratuitousness on God's part in forgiving men's sins. The last of these arguments we have already considered and refuted, when we mentioned that it was commonly adduced, not only by Socinians, against satisfaction in any sense, but also by the advocates of universal atonement, in opposition to those more strict and proper views of the nature of substitution and satisfaction, which are plainly inconsistent with their doctrine. And there is no more weight in the other argument, that Christ's sufferings were only temporary, while those we had incurred by sin were eternal. This may be, as we have already intimated, a good reason for adopting the phraseology of full equivalency, instead of precise identity,—the

\* Limborch, Theol. Christ., Lib. iii., c. xxii., p. 271. Ed. 1686.

† See Dr Alexander's Treatise on Justification, p. 28; Presbyterian Tracts, vol. ii.

*tantundem* instead of the *idem*. But it furnishes no disproof of substantial sameness, viewed with reference to the demands of law. The law denounced and demanded death, and Christ died for us. The law denounced eternal suffering against an innumerable multitude, who are, in fact, saved from ruin, and admitted to everlasting blessedness. But the temporary suffering and death, in human nature, of One who was at the same time a possessor of the divine nature, was, in point of weight and value, as a compliance with the provisions of the law, a satisfaction to its demands, a testimony to its infinite excellence and unchangeable obligation, a full equivalent for all.

I have dwelt the longer upon this point, because the views which, as we have seen, were held by the more Pelagian or Socinianizing portion of the Arminians,—as they are often called by the orthodox divines of the seventeenth century,—are the very same in substance as those which, in the present day, are advocated, more or less openly, even by the Calvinistic defenders of a universal atonement. They involve, I think, a most unwarrantable dilution or explaining away of the true meaning of the scriptural statements concerning the nature, causes, and objects of Christ's death; and in place of occupying the golden mean between the Socinian and the true Calvinistic doctrines, make a decided approximation to the former. It may be proper to mention, before leaving this topic, that this Arminian notion of the sufferings and death of Christ being merely a substitute for the penalty which sinners had deserved,—as implying something less than an equivalent or compensation, or at least than a *full* equivalent, an *adequate* compensation,—is commonly discussed by orthodox divines, under the name of *acceptilatio*,—a law term, which is employed to express a nominal, fictitious, or illusory payment.\*

A third peculiarity of the opinions commonly held by Arminians on this subject is, that they regard the appointment and acceptance of Christ's satisfaction as involving a relaxation or virtual abrogation of the divine law. This necessarily follows from what has been already explained. As Christ did not suffer the penalty of the law, or a full equivalent for it, but only a substitute for the penalty,—which God, of His good pleasure, agreed

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\* Turretin. de Satisfact., Pars. viii., | Marekii Compendium, tom. iii., p.  
sec. x.; De Moor, Commentarius in | 1083.



to accept, in the room or stead of the endurance of it by sinners who had incurred it,—the law was in no sense executed or enforced, but was virtually abrogated or set aside; whereas orthodox divines contend that the law was executed or enforced, the penalty which it denounced having been endured. It is of great importance, in order to our right understanding of the whole scheme of divine truth, that we should have correct conceptions and impressions of the perfection and unchangeableness of the law which God originally gave to man; as this doctrine, when rightly applied, tends equally to exclude the opposite extremes of Neonomianism, which is a necessary constituent element of Arminianism, and of Antinomianism, which is only an abuse or perversion of Calvinism, and for which Calvinism is in no way responsible. It is very easy to prove, as a general doctrine, that the moral law, as originally given by God to man, was, and must have been, perfect in its nature and requirements, and unchangeable in its obligations; and that God could never thereafter, without denying Himself, do anything which fairly implied, or was fitted to convey, the impression, that this law was defective in any respect,—was too rigid in its requirements, or too severe in its sanctions, or could stand in need either of derogation or abrogation. And yet the denial or disregard of this important principle,—which indeed is, and can be, fully admitted and applied only by Calvinists,—is at the root of much of the error that prevails in some important departments of theology.

If the penalty of the law, which men had incurred, was not endured, while yet sinners were pardoned and saved, then the law was not honoured, but trampled on, in their salvation, and is thus proved to have been defective and mutable. Calvinists, of course, admit, that in the pardon of sinners there does take place what may be called, in a wide and improper sense, a relaxation of the law; since the penalty is not, in fact, inflicted upon those who had transgressed, but upon another; that is, they admit a relaxation in regard to the persons suffering, but not in regard to the penalty threatened and suffered. This is, indeed, the grand peculiarity,—the mysterious, but most glorious peculiarity, of the Christian scheme,—that which may be said to constitute the doctrine of the atonement or satisfaction of Christ, that a substitute was provided, and that His substitution was accepted. But there is nothing in this which casts any dishonour upon the law, or appears to convict

it of imperfection and mutability. On the contrary, it is in every way fitted to impress upon us its absolute perfection and unchangeable obligation. In no proper sense does it involve a relaxation or abrogation of the law. The relaxation or abrogation of a law is opposed to, and precludes, compliance or fulfilment; whereas here there is compliance or fulfilment, as to the essence or substance of the matter,—namely, the infliction and endurance of the penalty, or, what is virtually the same thing, a full equivalent, an adequate compensation for it, and a relaxation only in regard to a circumstance or adjunct, namely, the particular person or persons who suffer it.

If an atonement or satisfaction be denied, then the law is wholly abrogated or set aside, and, of course, is dishonoured, by being convicted of imperfection and mutability in the salvation of sinners. And even when the idea of atonement or satisfaction is in some sense admitted, there is no real respect or honour shown to the law, because no compliance, in any fair and honest sense, with its demands,—no fulfilment of its exactions,—nothing to give us any impression of its perfection and unchangeableness in its general character, tendency, and object, *unless* this atonement or satisfaction was really the endurance of the penalty which the law denounced, or a full equivalent for it,—something which could serve the same purposes, with reference to the great ends of law and moral government, by impressing the same views of God's character, of His law, of sin, and of the principles that regulate His dealings with His creatures, as the actual punishment of all who had offended. Many of the human race perish, and are subjected to everlasting misery; and in them, of course, the law which denounced death as the punishment of sin, is enforced and executed. The rest are pardoned and saved. But in their case, too, the law is not abrogated, but executed; because the penalty which they had incurred is inflicted and suffered,—is borne, not indeed by them, in their own persons, but by another, acting as their substitute, and suffering in their room and stead. The provision of a substitute, who should endure the penalty due by those who were to be pardoned and saved, is a great, glorious, and mysterious act of extra-legal mercy and compassion; it is that marvellous provision, by which sinners are saved, in consistency with the perfections of God and the principles of His moral government. But in every other step in the process, the law is enforced, and its provisions are fully complied with; for the work of the

Substitute is accepted as an adequate ground for pardoning and saving those for whom He acted, just because it was the endurance of what they had deserved,—of all that the law did or could demand of them. And in this way we see, and should ever contemplate with adoring and grateful wonder, not an abrogation or relaxation, but an execution and enforcement of the law, even in the forgiveness and salvation of those who had broken its requirements, and became subject to its curse.\*

A fourth peculiarity of the views of the Arminians upon the subject of the atonement is this, that they represent its leading, proper, direct effect to be, to enable God, consistently with His justice and veracity, to enter into a new covenant with men, in which more favourable terms are proposed to them than before, and under which pardon and reconciliation are conveyed to all men conditionally,—upon the conditions of faith and repentance,—conditions which they are able to fulfil. This doctrine—which is, in substance, what is commonly called Neonomianism, or the scheme which represents the gospel as a new or modified law, offering pardon and eternal life to all men upon lower or easier terms—rests upon, as its basis, and requires for its full exposition, a more complete view of the Arminian scheme of theology, than merely their doctrine upon the subject of the atonement. It involves, of course, a denial of the scriptural and Calvinistic doctrines of predestination, and of the *entire* depravity of human nature; but we have to do with it at present in a more limited aspect, as a part of their doctrine of the atonement. And *here*, the substance of the charge which we adduce against it is just this,—that, like the doctrine of the Socinians, it explains away the true and fair import of the scriptural statements with respect to the nature of the connection between the sacrificial death of Christ and the forgiveness of men's sins, and represents that connection as much more *remote* and *indirect* than the Scripture does. It is true that the Scripture represents Christ, by His death, as ratifying and sealing a new and better covenant, of which He was the Surety or Sponsor; but then this covenant was not based upon the abrogation or relaxation of the original law, and the introduction of a new one, which offered life upon easier terms,—upon more favourable conditions, as the Arminian scheme repre-

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\* Turretin. de Satisfact., Pars. viii., sec. x.

sents the matter. On the contrary, as we have seen, it implied that the original law was enforced and executed; Christ, as the Surety or Sponsor of His people, *fulfilling the conditions of this new covenant, just by complying with the demands of the original law*—by enduring, in their room and stead, the penalty which it denounced. The Scripture represents, not only the ultimate object, but the direct and immediate effect, of Christ's sacrifice of Himself, to be to save sinners,—that is, to effect, procure, provide everything which their salvation implies or requires,—everything which is necessary to accomplish it; whereas, upon the Arminian theory, the salvation of sinners, as an actual result, was only the *ultimate* object of His death, its *immediate* effect being *merely*, as they are accustomed to express it, to make men—all men—*salvables*, or capable of being saved, and not to save them, or to secure their salvation. His death, upon their system, really *effected* nothing, but only enabled God to do thereafter whatever He pleased, in the way of conferring—upon any conditions which He might now think proper to require—forgiveness, acceptance, and eternal life. Accordingly, they are accustomed to describe its immediate object and effect as being merely this,—that it removed legal obstacles, and opened a door to God's bestowing, and men's receiving, pardon and salvation; and they consider it as effecting this, not *because* it was a compliance with the demands of the law, in the room and stead of those who were to be benefited by it, but merely because it was a great display of hatred to sin and of love to righteousness; after having made which, God could safely, or without any danger of conveying erroneous impressions of His character, bestow pardon and spiritual blessings upon all alike who were willing to accept of them.

This representation is in substance true, so far as it goes; but, like the common Socinian doctrine, it falls short of embodying the whole truth which Scripture teaches upon the subject, and of bringing it out so fully and distinctly as Scripture affords us materials for doing. We are not told in Scripture that Christ's death removed legal obstacles, and opened a door for men's pardon and salvation; but we admit that the statements are true—that the death of Christ did this, because it seems fairly involved in, or deducible from, the scriptural statements which warrant us in believing the more precise and definite doctrine,—that, by dying in our room, Christ satisfied the divine justice and law, and thereby



reconciled us to God. There were obstacles in the way of God's bestowing upon men pardon and salvation, and these required to be removed; the door was shut, and it needed to be opened. From the position which the death of Christ occupied in the scheme of salvation, and from the general effects ascribed to it, we feel that we are fully warranted in representing *it* as removing the obstacles and opening the door. But we contend that this does not by any means exhaust the Scripture account of its proper objects and effects, which represents it as more directly and immediately efficacious in accomplishing men's redemption from sin, and their enjoyment of God's favour. The Scripture not only indicates a closer and more direct connection as subsisting between the death of Christ and the actual pardon and salvation of men than the Arminian doctrine admits of; but it also, as we have seen, explains the connection between its proper nature and its immediate object and effect, by setting it before us, not merely as a display of the principles of the divine government and law,—although it was this,—but, more distinctly and precisely, as the endurance of the penalty of the law in our room. *It was just because it was the endurance of the penalty,—or, what is virtually the same thing, of a full equivalent for it,—that it was, or could be, a display or manifestation of the principles of the divine government and law;* and it bore upon the pardon and salvation of men, not merely through the intervention of its being such a display or manifestation,—though this consideration is true, and is not to be overlooked,—but still more directly from its own proper nature, as being a penal infliction, in accordance with the provisions of the law, endured in our room and stead, and as *thus* furnishing an adequate ground or reason why those in whose room it was suffered should not suffer, in their own person, the penalty which they had incurred.

The Arminians, holding the universality of the atonement, and rejecting the doctrine of election, regard the death of Christ as equally fitted, and equally intended, to promote the spiritual welfare and eternal salvation of all men; and, of course, cannot but regard it as *very indirectly and remotely* connected with the results to which it was directed. Of those for whom Christ died, for whose salvation His death was intended,—that is, of the whole human race,—some are saved, and some perish. If He died for all equally, for both classes alike, His death cannot be

the proper cause or ground of the salvation of any, and can have no direct or efficacious connection with salvation in any instance; and hence it is quite consistent in Arminians to represent the proper and immediate effect of His death to be merely that of enabling God, safely and honourably, to pardon any man who complied with the conditions He prescribed, or, what is virtually the same thing, that of procuring for Christ Himself the power of bestowing pardon upon any who might choose to accept of it;—that, merely, of removing obstacles or opening a door, without containing or producing any provision for effecting or securing that any men should enter in at the door, and actually partake of the blessings of salvation provided for them.

This general doctrine of the Arminians, with regard to the immediate object and effect of Christ's death being merely to enable God to pardon any who might be willing to accept the boon,—to remove out of the way legal obstacles to any or all men being pardoned,—to open a door into which any who choose might enter, and, by entering, obtain reconciliation and forgiveness,—is usually brought out more fully and distinctly in the way of maintaining the two following positions: First, that the impetration and the application of reconciliation and pardon, are not only distinct in idea or conception, but separate or disjoined in fact or reality; and, secondly,—what is virtually the same general principle, more distinctly developed, or an immediate consequence of it,—that while a causal or meritorious connection, though not direct and immediate, subsists between the death of Christ and the pardon of men's sins, no causal or meritorious connection exists between the death of Christ and faith and repentance, without which no man is actually reconciled to God, or forgiven; and to these two positions we would briefly advert.

First, They teach that Christ, by His sufferings and death, impetrated or procured pardon and reconciliation for men—for all men,—meaning thereby nothing more, in substance, than that He removed legal obstacles, and opened a door for God bestowing pardon and reconciliation upon all who would accept of them; while they also teach, that to many for whom these blessings were thus impetrated or procured by Him, even to all who ultimately perish, these blessings are not in fact applied. The reason,—the sole reason,—why these men do not actually partake in the blessings thus procured for them, is, because they refuse to

do what is in their own power, in the way of receiving them, or complying with the prescribed conditions. But this last consideration properly belongs to another branch of the Arminian system,—namely, their denial of man’s total depravity, and their assertion of his ability to repent and believe. We have at present to do with their doctrine of the possible, and actual, separation and disjunction of the impetration and the application of pardon or forgiveness. Calvinists admit that the impetration and the application of the blessings of salvation are distinct things, which may be conceived and spoken of apart from each other, which are effected by different agencies and at different periods. The impetration of all these blessings they ascribe to Christ, to what He did and suffered in our room and stead. The application of them, by which men individually become partakers in them, they ascribe to the Holy Spirit. It is the clear and constant doctrine of Scripture, that no man is actually pardoned and reconciled to God until he repent and believe. It is then only that he becomes a partaker of the blessings which Christ purchased. It is admitted, in this way, that the impetration or purchase, and the application or bestowal upon men individually, of pardon and reconciliation, are perfectly distinct from each other; but in opposition to the Arminian doctrine, which represents them as separable, and, in fact, separated and disjoined, as to the persons who are the objects of them, there is an important scriptural truth, held by almost all Calvinists,—that is, by all of them except those who believe in a universal or unlimited atonement,—which is thus stated in our Confession of Faith:\* “To all those for whom Christ hath purchased redemption, He doth certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same.” The word redemption is here evidently used, as it often is in Scripture, as comprehending those blessings which it was the direct object of Christ’s death to procure; and it includes, of course, reconciliation with God and the forgiveness of sin. The doctrine of Scripture and of our Confession is, that to all for whom these blessings were purchased or impetrated, they are also applied or communicated; so that *they* all, in fact, receive and partake of them, or are actually pardoned and reconciled.

The doctrine of the Arminians is, that redemption, at least in

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\* Confession, c. viii., s. 8.

so far as it includes the blessings of pardon and reconciliation, was procured for all men,—and for all men equally and alike ; but that there are many, even all those who ultimately perish, to whom these blessings, though procured for them, are not applied or communicated,—who never, in fact, receive or partake of them. That pardon and reconciliation are not applied or communicated to many, is not a matter of dispute ; this is admitted on all hands. The question is, whether they were procured, or impetrated, or purchased, for any to whom they are not applied,—for any but those to whom they are communicated, so that they actually receive, possess, and enjoy them ? This, indeed, constitutes the true and correct *status questionis* with respect to the extent of the atonement. The settlement of that controversy depends upon the decision of this question,—whether or not Christ impetrated, or procured, or purchased reconciliation and pardon for any men except those to whom these blessings are actually applied,—are ultimately communicated ; whether or not they are certainly and effectually applied and communicated to all for whom they were procured or purchased ? We do not at present meddle with this question, in so far as it is affected by the materials we have for deciding it, in what we have the means of knowing, concerning the will, the decrees, the design, the purpose of the Father and the Son in the matter, although this is manifestly an essential element in the decision ; but only in so far as it is connected with certain views regarding the nature and the immediate objects and effects of Christ's sufferings and death ; in other words, regarding the nature and import of the impetration or purchase of the blessings of reconciliation and pardon as set before us in Scripture. And here again, of course, our leading position is, as before, that such a view of the impetration of pardon and reconciliation, as does not also include or imply in it a certain and effectual provision for applying or communicating them to all for whom they were procured, does not come up to the full and fair import of the scriptural statements which unfold or indicate the immediate object and effect of the sufferings and death of Christ, and their bearing upon men's salvation, and upon all that salvation implies and requires,—especially upon their pardon and reconciliation to God. An impetration which may possibly not be followed by application,—which, in many cases, will not be conjoined with the actual communication of what was procured,—which will leave many for whom it



was undertaken and effected, to perish for ever, unpardoned and unreconciled,—does not correspond with, or come up to, the doctrines of substitution and satisfaction taught us in Scripture,—the information given us there concerning Christ's object in dying for men, and the bearing and consequences of His vicarious sufferings upon their relation to God, to His law, and to eternity.

Secondly, the second leading position implied in the defective and erroneous Arminian view, with respect to the immediate object and effect of Christ's death, is this,—that no causal or meritorious connection exists between it and faith and repentance, with which the application of, or actual participation in, the blessings of redemption, is inseparably connected. They teach that Christ procures pardon and reconciliation for all men upon condition of their repenting and believing; but they deny that, by dying, He procured for any man faith and repentance, or made *any* provision whatever for effecting or securing that any man should, in fact, repent or believe. The general principles of the Calvinistic scheme of doctrine, as distinguished from the Arminian, of course imply, that men cannot repent and believe of themselves, and that God, in His good time, and in the execution of His own decrees and purposes, gives faith and repentance to all those, and to those only, whom He has chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, and whom He has specially watched over, and attended to, in every step of the great process by which the salvation of sinners is ultimately accomplished; but here, again, in accordance with the plan and object we have repeatedly intimated, we advert at present only to the connection between the death of Christ and the production of faith and repentance in all in whom they are produced. Arminians differ among themselves as to the ability of men to repent and believe, and as to the kind and measure of divine agency that may be concerned in inducing or enabling men to repent and believe: the more consistent among them resolving the production of faith and repentance in each case into the powers or capacities of man himself; and the less consistent, but more evangelical, resolving it, with the sacred Scriptures and the Calvinists, into the almighty agency of the Divine Spirit. But they all deny that Christ, by His sufferings and death, procured, or purchased, or merited faith and repentance for those who come at length to believe and repent. They all maintain that, whatever may be the cause or source of faith,

it is not in any case one of the results of Christ's death—one of the fruits of His purchase; it is not to be traced to the shedding of His precious blood, as if any causal connection existed between them,—as if the one exerted any meritorious or efficacious influence upon the other.

The reason of their unanimous maintenance of these views is very obvious. If Christ, by His sufferings and death, made provision for the production of faith, in order that thereby, in accordance with God's arrangements, men individually might actually partake in the blessings He procured for them,—if the production of faith is indeed one of the objects and results of His death, one of the fruits of His purchase,—then He could not have died for all men; He must have died only for those who ultimately believe; He must have made certain and effectual provision for applying and communicating redemption to all for whom He purchased it. And Calvinists undertake to show that Scripture sanctions the position, that faith, wherever it has been produced in any man, is to be traced to the death of Christ as its source or cause,—is to be regarded as one of the blessings purchased for him, and for all who are ever made partakers of it, by the shedding of Christ's blood; to prove this not only from particular statements of Scripture establishing this precise point, but also from the general representations given us there of the connection between the death of Christ, and not merely a general scheme of salvation for mankind at large, but the actual salvation of each man individually. The doctrine of our Confession upon the subject is this: \* “The Lord Jesus, by His perfect obedience and sacrifice of Himself, which He through the eternal Spirit once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the justice of His Father; and purchased not only reconciliation, BUT an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father hath given unto Him.” Reconciliation was purchased by His sacrifice of Himself, and purchased for certain men. Along with this, and by the same price, was purchased for the same persons, an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven; and, of course, also that faith of theirs, with which both reconciliation and the everlasting inheritance are inseparably connected. The Arminians admit, that by His sacrifice He purchased for men

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\* Confession, c. viii., s. 5.

reconciliation; but then they hold that, as it was purchased for all men, and as many men are never reconciled to God, what He purchased for any was not properly reconciliation, but rather what has been called *reconciliability*, or a capacity of being reconciled,—that is, the removing of legal obstacles, that they may all pass over, if they choose; the opening of a door, that they may all enter, if they are so disposed. And thus the substance of what they teach upon this point is this,—that, notwithstanding all that Christ did and suffered in order to save sinners, it was quite possible, so far as anything contemplated by, or involved in, the shedding of His blood was concerned,—so far as any provision was made by His humiliation and sacrifice for averting this result,—that no sinner might have been saved; that all for whom He died might perish for ever; that the everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven might never have been enjoyed by any one of those whom He came to seek and to save, and for whose eternal happiness He poured out His blood.\*

These are the leading peculiarities of the views commonly held by Arminian writers, in regard to this great doctrine of the atonement, though they are certainly not held with equal fulness and explicitness by all who may be fairly ranked under this general designation. Indeed, it will be found that the sounder Arminians, especially when they are engaged in defending the doctrine of the atonement against the Socinians, often bring out the doctrines of the substitution and satisfaction of Christ clearly and fully,—defend them with much learning and ability, and seem to understand them in a sense which, in consistency, ought to exclude all those views of theirs concerning the necessity of the atonement,—its nature,—its relation to the divine law,—and its immediate object and effect, which we have explained. But whenever they proceed to consider its bearing upon the condition and fate of men individually, in relation to God and eternity, *and whenever they begin to unfold the doctrine of its universality*, then we immediately discover the traces, more or less fully developed, of the errors and corruptions which I have stated and exposed.

My principal object in making this detailed statement of the peculiar views generally held by Arminians upon this subject, besides that of explaining one important department of the con-

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\* Davenant De Morte Christi, p. 87.

troversies that have been carried on regarding it, was to bring out these two considerations: First, That Arminians have generally manifested a strong tendency to dilute or explain away the Scripture doctrines of the substitution and satisfaction of Christ; that, in their controversies with Calvinists upon this subject, they often greatly attenuate or modify the views which they themselves maintain, when defending the doctrine of the atonement against the Socinians; or at least refuse to follow them out to their legitimate consequences and applications, and thus obscure, and, to some extent, corrupt the great doctrine which most directly and immediately unfolds the foundation of a sinner's hope. Secondly, That this tendency of the Arminians to modify or explain away the Scripture doctrines of the substitution and satisfaction of Christ, and to approximate more or less to Socinian views, or at least to rest in vague and ambiguous generalities,—in loose and indefinite statements,—about the true nature, and the immediate objects and effects, of the sufferings and death of Christ, and the connection subsisting between them, is traceable to, or in some way intimately connected with, their doctrine of the universality of the atonement,—a consideration which strongly confirms the important position, *that the nature of the atonement settles or determines its extent*, and prepares us to expect to find, among all who hold a universal atonement,—Calvinists as well as Arminians,—the prevalence, in a greater or less degree, and with more or less of explicit development, of defective and erroneous views, with respect to the substitution and satisfaction of Christ, His bearing our sins in His own body, and by bearing them, bearing them away.

*Sec. VIII.—Extent of the Atonement.*

We proceed now to the third and last division,—namely, the consideration of the peculiar views, in regard to the atonement, of those divines who profess to hold Calvinistic doctrines upon other points, but on this concur with, or approximate to, the views of the Arminians; and this, of course, leads us to examine the subject of the extent of the atonement,—a topic which is much discussed among theologians in the present day, and is, on this account, as well as from its own nature and bearings, possessed of much interest and importance.



There are now, and for more than two centuries,—that is, since the time of Cameron, a Scotchman, who became Professor of Theology in the Protestant Church of France,—there have always been, theologians, and some of them men of well-merited eminence, who have held the Calvinistic doctrines of the entire depravity of human nature, and of God's unconditional election of some men from eternity to everlasting life, but who have also maintained the universality of the atonement,—the doctrine that Christ died for all men, and not for those only who are ultimately saved. As some men have agreed with Arminians in holding the universality of the atonement who were Calvinists in all other respects, and as a considerable appearance of Scripture evidence can be produced for the doctrine that Christ died for all men, it has been generally supposed that the doctrine of particular redemption, as it is often called, or of a limited atonement, forms the weak point of the Calvinistic system,—that which can with most plausibility be assailed, and can with most difficulty be defended. Now, this impression has some foundation. There is none of the Arminian doctrines, in favour of which so much appearance of Scripture evidence can be adduced, as that of the universality of the atonement; and if Arminians could really prove that Christ died for the salvation of all men, then the argument which, as I formerly intimated, they commonly deduce from this doctrine, in opposition to the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, could not, taken by itself, be easily answered. It is evident, however, on the other side, that if the Arminian doctrine of the universality of the atonement can be disproved, when tried upon its own direct and proper grounds and evidences, without founding upon its apparent inconsistency with the other doctrines of the Calvinistic system, then not only is one important principle established, which has been held by most Calvinists,—that, namely, of a limited atonement, that is, of an atonement limited as to its destination or intended objects,—but great additional strength is given to the general body of the evidence in support of Calvinism.

This is the aspect in which the arrangement we have followed leads us to examine it. Looking merely at the advantage of controversial impression, it would not be the most expedient course to enter upon the Arminian controversy, as we are doing, through the discussion of the extent of the atonement, since Arminians can adduce a good deal that is plausible in support of its univer-

sality, and found a strong argument against Calvinistic predestination on the assumption of its universality,—considerations which would suggest the policy of first establishing some of the other doctrines of Calvinism against the Arminians, and then employing these doctrines, already established, to confirm the direct and proper evidence against a universal, and in favour of a limited, atonement. But since we have been led to consider the subject of an atonement in general, in opposition to the Socinians, we have thought it better to continue, without interruption, the investigation of this subject until we finish it, although it does carry us into the Arminian controversy, at the point where Arminianism seems to be strongest. We have thought it better to do this than to return to the subject of the extent of the atonement, *after* discussing some of the other doctrines controverted between the Calvinists and the Arminians. And we have had the less hesitation about following out this order, for these reasons: first, because we are not afraid to encounter the Arminian doctrine of a universal atonement, upon the ground of its own direct and proper evidence, without calling in the assistance that might be derived from the previous proof of the other doctrines of Calvinism; secondly, because the examination of the whole subject of the atonement at once enables us to bring out more fully the principle, which we reckon of fundamental importance upon this whole question,—namely, that the nature of the atonement settles or determines its extent; and, thirdly, because, if it can be really shown, as we have no doubt it can, that the Scripture view of the nature, and immediate object and effect, of the atonement, *disproves its universality*, then we have, in this way, what is commonly reckoned the weakest part of the Calvinistic system conclusively established, on its own direct and proper evidence; and established, moreover, by the force of all the arguments which have been generally employed not only by Calvinists, but by the sounder or un-Socinianized Arminians, in disputing with the Socinians on the truth and reality of an atonement.

In proceeding now to advert to the subject of the extent of the atonement, as a distinct, independent topic, we shall first explain the doctrine which has been generally held upon this subject by Calvinists, commonly called the doctrine of particular redemption, or that of a limited or definite atonement; and then, secondly, advert to the differences between the doctrine

of universal or unlimited atonement or redemption, as held by Arminians, and as held by those who profess Calvinistic doctrines upon other points.

The question as to the extent of the atonement, is commonly and popularly represented as amounting in substance to this: Whether Christ died for all men, or only for the elect,—for those who ultimately believe and are saved? But this state of the question does not bring out the true nature of the point in dispute with sufficient fulness, accuracy, and precision. And, accordingly, we find that neither in the canons of the Synod of Dort, nor in our Confession of Faith,—which are commonly reckoned the most important and authoritative expositions of Calvinism,—is there any formal or explicit deliverance given upon the question *as stated in this way*, and in these terms. Arminians, and other defenders of a universal atonement, are generally partial to this mode of stating it, because it seems most readily and obviously to give to their doctrine the sanction and protection of certain scriptural statements, which look like a direct assertion,—but are not,—that Christ died for all men; and because there are some ambiguities about the meaning of the expressions, of which they usually avail themselves. I have no doubt that the controversy about the extent of the atonement is substantially decided in our Confession, though no formal deliverance is given upon the precise question, whether Christ died for all men, or only for the elect; and it may tend to bring out clearly the true state of the question, as well as contribute to the subsidiary, but still important, object of assisting to determine what is the doctrine of our Confession upon this subject, if we advert to the statements it contains regarding it, and the manner in which it gives its deliverance upon it. We have already had occasion to quote, incidentally, the principal declarations of the Confession upon this subject, in explaining the peculiar views of the Arminians, with regard to the atonement in general; but it may be proper now to examine them somewhat more fully. They are chiefly the following:\* “They who are elected being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ; are effectually called unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by His power through faith unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by

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\* C. iii., s. vi.

Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only."

There are two questions which may be, and, indeed, have been, started with respect to the meaning of these words; attempts having been made to show that they do not contradict or exclude the doctrine of a universal atonement, as it has been sometimes held by Calvinists. The first question is as to the import of the word "redeemed;" and it turns upon this point,—Does the word describe merely the impetration or purchase of pardon and reconciliation for men by the death of Christ? or does it comprehend the application as well as the impetration? If it be understood in the first or more limited sense, as descriptive only of the impetration or purchase, then, of course, the statement of the Confession clearly asserts a definite or limited atonement,—comprehending as its objects those only who, in fact, receive all other spiritual blessings, and are ultimately saved; whereas, if it included the application as well as the impetration, the statement might consist with the universality of the atonement, as it is not contended, even by Arminians, that, in this wide sense, any are redeemed by Christ, except those who ultimately believe and are saved. Indeed, one of the principal uses to which the Arminians commonly apply the distinction between impetration and application, as they explain it, is this,—that they interpret the scriptural statements which seem to speak of all men as comprehended in the objects of Christ's death, of the impetration of pardon and reconciliation for them; and interpret those passages which seem to indicate some limitation in the objects of His dying, of the application of those blessings to men individually. Now, it seems very manifest that the word "redeemed" is to be taken here in the first, or more limited sense,—as descriptive only of the impetration or purchase of pardon and reconciliation; because there is a distinct enumeration of all the leading steps in the great process which, originating in God's eternal, absolute election of some men, terminates in their complete salvation,—their redemption by Christ being evidently, from the whole structure of the statement, not comprehensive of, but distinguished from, their vocation and justification, which *constitute* the application of the blessings of redemption,—the benefits which Christ purchased.

The second question to which I referred, applies only to the last clause quoted,—namely, "neither are any other redeemed by



Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only." Here it has been made a question, whether the concluding restriction, to "the elect only," applies to each of the preceding predicates, "redeemed," "called," "justified," etc., *singly and separately*, or only to the whole of them taken collectively; that is, whether it be intended to be here asserted that not any one of these things, such as "redeemed," can be predicated of any but the elect only, or merely that the whole of them, taken in conjunction, cannot be predicated of any others. The latter interpretation,—namely, that there are none but the elect of whom the whole collectively can be predicated,—would make the declaration a mere truism, serving no purpose, and really giving no deliverance upon anything, although the repetition of the general statement about the consequences of election, or the execution of God's eternal decree, in a negative form, was manifestly intended to be peculiarly emphatic, and to contain a denial of an error reckoned important. The Confession, therefore, must be regarded as teaching, that it is not true of any but the elect only, that they are redeemed by Christ, any more than it is true that any others are called, justified, or saved. Here I may remark by the way, that though many modern defenders of a universal atonement regard the word *redemption* as including the application as well as the impetration of pardon and reconciliation,—and, in this sense, disclaim the doctrine of universal redemption,—yet a different phraseology was commonly used in theological discussions about the period at which the Confession was prepared, and in the seventeenth century generally. Then the defenders of a universal atonement generally maintained, without any hesitation, the doctrine of universal redemption,—using the word, of course, to describe only the impetration, and not the application, of spiritual and saving blessings; and this holds true, both of those who admitted, and of those who denied, the Calvinistic doctrine of election. Of the first of these cases (the Calvinists) we have an instance in Richard Baxter's work, which he entitled, "Universal Redemption of Mankind by the Lord Jesus Christ;" and of the second (the Arminians) in Dr Isaac Barrow's sermons, entitled, "The Doctrine of Universal Redemption Asserted and Explained."

The other leading statements upon this subject in the Confession, are those which we have already had occasion to quote from the eighth chapter, secs. 5, 8: "The Lord Jesus, by His

perfect obedience and sacrifice of Himself, which He through the Eternal Spirit once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the justice of His Father; and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father hath given unto Him;" and again: "To all those for whom Christ hath purchased redemption" (that is, pardon and reconciliation), "He doth certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same; making intercession for them; and revealing unto them, in and by the word, the mysteries of salvation; effectually persuading them by His Spirit to believe and obey," etc. *Now, this latter statement, as I formerly intimated, contains, and was intended to contain, the true status quaestionis in the controversy about the extent of the atonement.* It is to be explained by a reference to the mode of conducting this controversy, between the Calvinists and Arminians, about the time of the Synod of Dort, and also to the mode of conducting the controversy excited in France by Cameron,\* and afterwards carried on by Amyraldus in France and Holland, and by Baxter in England. The fundamental position of all who had advocated the doctrine of atonement against the Socinians, but had also maintained that it was universal or unlimited, was—that Christ, by His sufferings and death, purchased pardon and reconciliation for all men, without distinction or exception; but that these blessings are applied or communicated to, and, of course, are actually enjoyed by, those only who came, from whatever cause, to repent and believe. This, of course, is the only sense in which the doctrine of universal atonement, or redemption, could be held by any who did not believe in the doctrine of universal salvation. And the assertion or denial of this must, from the nature of the case, form the substance of the controversy about the extent of the atonement, whatever diversity of phraseology may be, at different times, employed in discussing it.

The doctrine of a universal atonement necessarily implies, not only that God desired and intended that all men should be benefited by Christ's death,—for this, in some sense, is universally admitted,—but *that, in its special and peculiar character as an*

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\* It is a curious circumstance that the followers of Cameron maintained that the Synod of Dort did not condemn their views, because it did not | make any statement precisely similar to this of our Confession. Dallæi Apologia pro duabus Synodis, p. 623.

*atonement*,—that is, as a penal infliction, as a ransom price,—it should effect something bearing favourably upon their spiritual welfare. This could be only by its purchasing for all men the pardon of their sins and reconciliation with God, which the Scripture plainly represents as the proper and direct results or effects of Christ's death. The advocates of this doctrine accordingly say, that He impetrated or purchased these blessings for all men; and as many are never actually pardoned and reconciled, they are under the necessity, as I formerly explained, *because they hold a universal atonement*, both of explaining away pardon and reconciliation as meaning merely the removing of legal obstacles, or the opening up of a door, for God's bestowing these blessings, and of maintaining that these blessings are impetrated for many to whom they are never applied. Now this, of course, is the position which the statement in the Confession was intended to contradict, by asserting that impetration and application, though distinct, are co-extensive, and are never, in fact, separated,—that all for whom these blessings were ever designed or procured, do certainly receive them; or, conversely, that they were not designed, or procured, for any except those who ultimately partake of them. This, then, is the form in which the controversy about the extent of the atonement is stated and decided in our Confession of Faith; and, whatever differences of phraseology may have been introduced into the discussion of this subject in more modern times, it is always useful to recur to this mode of stating the question, as fitted to explain the true nature of the points involved in it, and to suggest clear conceptions of the real import of the different topics adduced upon both sides. Those who are usually represented as holding the doctrine of particular redemption, or limited atonement,—as teaching that Christ did not die for all men, but only for the elect,—contend for nothing more than this, and cannot be shown to be under any obligation, in point of consistency, to contend for more,—namely, that, to all those for whom Christ hath purchased redemption, He doth certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same; and all who take the opposite side, and maintain that Christ died for all men,—that His atonement was universal or unlimited,—can, without difficulty, be proved to maintain, or to be bound in consistency to maintain,—if they really admit an atonement at all, and, at the same time, deny universal salvation,

—that He purchased redemption—that is, pardon and reconciliation—for many to whom they are never applied, who never are put in possession of them.

We would now make two or three observations, suggested by this account of the state of the question. First, The advocates of a limited or definite atonement do not deny, but maintain, the infinite intrinsic sufficiency of Christ's satisfaction and merits. They regard His sufferings and death as possessed of value, or worth, sufficient to have purchased pardon and reconciliation for the whole race of fallen man. The value or worth of His sacrifice of Himself depends upon, and is measured by, the dignity of His person, and is therefore infinite. Though many fewer of the human race had been to be pardoned and saved, an atonement of infinite value would have been necessary, in order to procure for them these blessings; and though many more, yea, all men, had been to be pardoned and saved, the death of Christ, being an atonement of infinite value, would have been amply sufficient, as the ground or basis of their forgiveness or salvation. We know nothing of the amount or extent of Christ's sufferings in themselves. Scripture tells us only of *their relation to the law, in compliance with the provision of which they were inflicted and endured*. This implies their infinity, in respect of intrinsic legal worth or value; and this, again, implies their full intrinsic sufficiency for the redemption of all men, if God had intended to redeem and save them. There have been some Calvinists who have contended that Christ's sufferings were just as much, in amount or extent, as were sufficient for redeeming, or paying the ransom price of, the elect,—of those who are actually saved; so that, if more men had been to be pardoned and saved, Christ must have suffered more than He did, and if fewer, less. But those who have held this view have been very few in number, and of no great weight or influence. The opinion, however, is one which the advocates of universal atonement are fond of adducing and refuting, because it is easy to refute it; and because this is fitted to convey the impression that the advocates of a limited atonement in general hold this, or something like it, and thus to insinuate an unfavourable idea of the doctrine. There is no doubt that all the most eminent Calvinistic divines hold the infinite worth or value of Christ's atonement,—its full sufficiency for expiating all the sins of all men.



A distinction was generally employed by the schoolmen, which has been often adverted to in this discussion, and which it may be proper to explain. They were accustomed to say, that Christ died sufficiently for all men, and efficaciously for the elect,—*sufficiens pro omnibus, efficaciter pro electis*. Some orthodox divines, who wrote before the extent of the atonement had been made the subject of full, formal, and elaborate discussion,—and Calvin himself among the rest,—admitted the truth of this scholastic position. But after controversy had thrown its full light upon the subject, orthodox divines generally refused to adopt this mode of stating the point, because it seemed to ascribe to Christ a *purpose* or *intention* of dying in the room of all, and of benefiting all by the proper effects of His death, as an atonement or propitiation; not that they doubted or denied the intrinsic sufficiency of His death for the redemption of all men, but because the statement—whether originally so intended or not—was so expressed as to suggest the idea, that Christ, in dying, desired and intended that all men should partake in the proper and peculiar effects of the shedding of His blood. Calvinists do not object to say that the death of Christ—viewed objectively, apart from His purpose or design—was sufficient for all, and efficacious for the elect, because this statement in the first clause merely asserts its infinite intrinsic sufficiency, which they admit; whereas the original scholastic form of the statement,—namely, that He died sufficiently for all,—seems to indicate that, when He died, *He intended* that all should derive some saving and permanent benefit from His death. The attempt made by some defenders of universal atonement to prove, that a denial of the universality of the atonement necessarily implies a denial of its universal intrinsic sufficiency, has nothing to do with the settlement of the state of the question, but only with the arguments by which the opposite side may be defended; and, therefore, I need not advert to it.

Secondly, It is not denied by the advocates of particular redemption, or of a limited atonement, that mankind in general, even those who ultimately perish, do derive some advantages or benefits from Christ's death; and no position they hold requires them to deny this. They believe that important benefits have accrued to the whole human race from the death of Christ, and that in these benefits those who are finally impenitent and unbelieving partake. What they deny is, that Christ intended to

procure, or did procure, for all men those blessings which are the proper and peculiar fruits of His death, in its specific character as an atonement,—that He procured or purchased redemption—that is, pardon and reconciliation—for all men. Many blessings flow to mankind at large from the death of Christ, collaterally and incidentally, in consequence of the relation in which men, viewed collectively, stand to each other. All these benefits were, of course, foreseen by God, when He resolved to send His Son into the world; they were contemplated or designed by Him, as what men should receive and enjoy. They are to be regarded and received as bestowed by Him, and as thus unfolding His glory, indicating His character, and actually accomplishing His purposes; and they are to be viewed as coming to men through the channel of Christ's mediation,—of His sufferings and death.\*

The truth of this position has been considered as affording some warrant for saying, in a vague and indefinite sense, that Christ died for all men; and in this sense, and on this account, some Calvinists have scrupled about meeting the position that Christ died for all men with a direct negative, as if they might thus be understood as denying that there was any sense in which all men derived benefit, and in which God intended that they should derive benefit, from Christ's death. But this position does not at all correspond with the proper import of what Scripture means when it tells us that Christ died for men. This, *as we prove against the Socinians*, implies that He substituted Himself in their room and stead, that He put Himself in their legal position, that He made satisfaction to God's justice for their sins, or that He purchased redemption for them; and this, we contend, does not hold true of any but those who are actually at length pardoned and saved. The advocates of universal atonement, then, have no right to charge us with teaching that none derive any benefit from Christ's death except those who are pardoned and saved; we do not teach this, and we are not bound in consistency to teach it. We teach the opposite of this; and we are not deterred from doing so by the fear lest we should thereby afford to those who are opposed to us a medium for proving that, in the proper scriptural sense, He died for all men, or that the leading and peculiar bene-

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\* Witsius, De Œcon. Fœd., Lib. | Turretin., Loc. xiv., Qu. xiv., sec.  
ii., c. ix., sec. iv. | xi.

fits which His death procured for men,—the benefits of salvation,—were designed or intended for all mankind.

There is no very material difference between the state of the question with respect to the extent of the atonement,—and to that at present we confine our attention,—according as its universality is maintained by Arminians, or by those who hold Calvinistic doctrines upon other points. The leading distinction is, that the Calvinistic universalists are obliged to practise more caution in their declarations upon some points, and to deal somewhat more in vague and ambiguous generalities than the Arminians, in order to avoid as much as possible the appearance of contradicting or renouncing, by what they say upon this subject, their professed Calvinism upon other topics.

As the controversy with regard to the extent of the atonement *does not* turn,—though many of the universalists would fain have it so,—upon the question of the infinite sufficiency of Christ's sufferings and merits, *it must* turn upon the question of the *purpose, design, or intention* of God in inflicting sufferings and death upon His Son, and of Christ in voluntarily submitting to them. Universal atonement thus indicates and proves the existence, on the part of God and Christ, of a purpose, design, or intention, in some sense or other, to save all men. And for the Calvinistic universalists to assert the existence of such a purpose, design, or intention,—in combination and in consistency with the doctrine that God has from eternity elected some men to everlasting life, and determined to save them,—requires the introduction of a good deal of confusion and ambiguity into their mode of stating and arguing the case. They cannot say, with the Arminians, that Christ died equally for all men ; for they cannot dispute that God's special purpose of grace in regard to the elect,—which Arminians deny, but they admit,—must have, in some sense and to some extent, regulated or influenced the whole of the process by which God's purpose was accomplished,—by which His decree of election was executed. They accordingly contend for a general design or purpose of God and Christ—indicated by the alleged universality of the atonement—to save all men ; and a special design or purpose—indicated by the speciality of the bestowal of that faith (which they admit—which the Arminians, practically at least, deny—to be God's gift)—to save only the elect. But this, again, belongs rather to the argument of the case than to the state of the question.

The substance of the matter is, that they concur with the Arminians in denying the great truth laid down in our Confession of Faith, that redemption,—that is, pardon and reconciliation,—are actually applied and communicated to all for whom they were procured or purchased; and, to a large extent, they employ the very same arguments in order to defend their position.

It may be worth while briefly to advert to one of the particular forms in which, in our own day, the state of the question has been exhibited by some of the Calvinistic universalists. It is that of asserting what they call *a general and a special reference* of Christ's death,—a general reference which it has to all men, and a special reference which it has to the elect. This is manifestly a very vague and ambiguous distinction, which may mean almost anything or nothing, and is, therefore, very well adapted to a transition state of things, when men are passing from comparative orthodoxy on this subject into deeper and more important error. This general reference of Christ's death,—its reference to all men,—may mean merely, that, in consequence of Christ's death, certain benefits or advantages flow to mankind at large, and in this sense it is admitted by those who hold the doctrine of particular redemption; or it may describe the proper Arminian doctrine of universal or unlimited atonement; or, lastly, it may indicate anything or everything that may be supposed to lie *between* these two views. It cannot, therefore, be accepted as a true and fair account of the state of the question about the extent of the atonement, as discussed between Calvinists, and may not unreasonably be regarded with some jealousy and suspicion, as at least fitted, if not intended, to involve the true state of the question in darkness or ambiguity. The universality of the atonement had been defended before our Confession of Faith was prepared, by abler and more learned men,—both Calvinists and Arminians,—than any who in modern times have undertaken the same cause. The authors of the Confession were thoroughly versant in these discussions; and it will be found, upon full study and investigation, that whatever variety of forms either the state of the question, or the arguments adduced on both sides, may have assumed in more modern discussions, the whole substance and merits of the case are involved in, and can be most fairly and fully discussed by, the examination of their position,—namely, that “to all those for whom Christ hath purchased redemption, He doth certainly and effectually apply and communi-



cate the same." This position proceeds upon the assumption that He purchased redemption for men. The truth of this assumption is involved in the establishment of the doctrine of the atonement,—of Christ's death being a ransom price,—in opposition to the Socinians, and must be admitted by all, unless, while professedly holding the doctrine of the atonement, they virtually sink down to Socinianism, by explaining it entirely away. And this being assumed, the position asserts, that all for whom redemption was purchased, have it applied or communicated to them; and that, of course, Christ died for the purpose, and with the intention, of procuring or purchasing pardon and reconciliation only for those who ultimately receive them, when they repent and believe.

*Sec. IX.—Evidence as to the Extent of the Atonement.*

I do not intend to enter here into anything like a full investigation of the scriptural evidence upon the subject of the extent of the atonement. I can only make a few observations upon some of the points involved in it,—suggesting some of the things that ought to be kept in view in the study of the subject; and in doing so, I need not hesitate, from any fear of being misunderstood, after the full explanations I have given about the true state of the question, to use, for the sake of brevity and convenience, the expressions, universal and limited atonement,—universal and particular redemption,—and Christ's dying for all men, or only for the elect.

The advocates of universal atonement confidently aver that this doctrine is clearly and explicitly taught in Scripture,—so clearly and explicitly, that it is to be taken as a first principle, and ought to regulate and control the interpretation and application of other passages which may seem inconsistent with it; and they appeal, in support of this position, to those scriptural statements which speak of Christ's dying or making propitiation for all,—for the world, the whole world,—and even, it is alleged, for some who do, or may, ultimately perish. We contend that these statements do not necessarily, or even naturally, bear the construction which our opponents put upon them; and that there are other scriptural statements which clearly indicate a limitation as to the persons whose spiritual welfare,—whose actual possession and enjoyment of any spiritual blessings,—was contemplated

or intended by the death of Christ, or by Christ in dying. Our opponents, of course, profess to show that *these* statements may be all interpreted in accordance with their doctrine of the universality of the atonement. We profess to be able to assign good reasons why a language of a general, indefinite, or unlimited signification should have been employed in speaking of the objects and effects of Christ's death, while no full and proper universality was intended; and they profess to be able to assign good reasons why, in some cases, some limitation should be indicated, while yet there was no intention of denying that Christ died for all men,—that is, for all the individuals of the human race, *pro omnibus et singulis*. This is a general description of the way in which the controversy is conducted by the opposite parties, in the investigation of the scriptural evidence bearing more directly and immediately upon the subject of the extent of the atonement. It may be said to comprehend three leading departments: First, The investigation of the exact meaning and import of the principal passages adduced in support of the two opposite doctrines, especially with the view of ascertaining whether we can lay hold of any one position upon the subject which is distinct and definite, and does not admit, without great and unwarrantable straining, of being explained away, and which may therefore be regarded as a fixed point,—a regulating principle,—of interpretation. Secondly, The comparative facility and fairness with which the passages adduced on the opposite side may be explained, so as to be consistent with the position maintained; it being, of course, a strong argument in favour of the truth of any doctrine, that the passages adduced against it can be shown to be consistent with it, without its being necessary to have recourse to so much force and straining as are required in order to make the *opposite* doctrine appear to be consistent with the passages that are adduced against it. Thirdly, The investigation of the question, *which* doctrine is most consistent with a combined and harmonious interpretation of *all* the passages bearing upon the subject,—which of them most fully and readily suggests, or admits of, the laying down of general positions, that, when combined together, embrace and exhaust the whole of the information given us in Scripture regarding it.

Now, I believe that under each of these three heads it can be, and has been, shown, that the doctrine of a definite or limited

atonement,—limited, that is, as to its destination and intended objects,—has a decided superiority over the opposite one, and is therefore to be received as the true doctrine of Scripture. It has a clearer and firmer support in particular statements of Scripture, that do not, plausibly or fairly, admit of being explained away. More obvious and satisfactory reasons can be assigned why in definite and general language should be employed upon the subject, without its being intended to express absolute universality,—to include the whole human race, and all the individuals who compose it,—than can be adduced in explanation of language which indicates a limitation, if Christ died for all men. And, lastly, it is easier to present a combined and harmonious view of the whole information given us in Scripture upon the subject, if the doctrine of a limited or definite atonement be maintained, than if it be denied.

The materials of the first of these divisions consist exclusively of the examination of the meaning and import of particular texts; and this is the basis and foundation of the whole argument. A very admirable and masterly summary of the direct scriptural evidence will be found in the first part of Dr Candlish's recently published book on the atonement. I shall only make a few observations upon the topics comprehended in the other two heads.

No scriptural statements are, or even appear to be, inconsistent with the doctrine of a limited atonement, which merely assert or imply that Christ's sufferings were sufficient, in point of intrinsic worth and value, for the redemption of the whole human race; or that all men do, in fact, derive some benefits or advantages from Christ's death, and that God intended that they should enjoy these. We have already shown, in explaining the state of this question, that the advocates of a limited atonement do not deny, and are under no obligation in point of consistency to deny, these positions. Neither is it inconsistent with our doctrine, that God's sending, or giving, His Son should be represented as resulting from, and indicating, love to the world or to mankind in general,—*φιλανθρωπία*. If God intended that all men should derive some benefits and advantages from Christ's mediation, this may be regarded as indicating, in some sense, love or kindness to the human race in general, though He did not design or intend giving His Son to save every individual of the human family, or to do

anything directed to that object. There is another race of fallen creatures under God's moral government, for whose salvation,—for the salvation of any of whom,—He made no provision. And God may be truly said to have loved the world, or the human race, or the family of man, as distinguished from, or to the exclusion of, the fallen angels; and, as the result of this love, to have sent His Son, although He had no purpose of, and made no provision for, saving them all. On the other hand, it should be remembered, that Christ's dying for all men necessarily implies that God loved all men individually, and loved them so as to have, in some sense, desired and intended to save them; and that everything which proves that God did not desire and intend to save all men, equally proves that Christ did not die for them all; and that everything which must be taken in, to limit or modify the position that God desired and intended, or purposed, the salvation of all men, must equally limit or modify the position that Christ died for all. The scriptural evidence of these two positions is usually produced indiscriminately by the advocates of universal atonement, as equally proving their doctrine. And if, on the one hand, they afford each other some mutual countenance and support, so, on the other, they must be burdened with each other's difficulties, and must be both exposed to the explanations or modifications which each or either may suggest or require.

A favourite passage of our opponents is, "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth;" and again, "Who gave Himself a ransom for all."\* Now, independently altogether of the clear evidence which the context furnishes,—that the "all men" *must* mean men of all sorts, without any distinction of kinds or classes, and not all men, the whole human race, singly and individually,—it is plain that God will have all men to be saved, in the same sense, and with the same limitations and modifications, under which Christ gave Himself a ransom for all, and *vice versa*. And it is further evident, that God will have all men to be saved, in the same sense, and to the same extent only, in which "He will have all men to come to the knowledge of the truth." Now, we know that God does not, in any strict and proper sense, will all men (*omnes et singulos*) to

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\* 1 Tim. ii. 4, 6.



come to the knowledge of the truth, though He has imposed upon all men who hear the truth an obligation to receive it; and it is proof sufficient that He does not will all men,—that is, understanding thereby all the individuals of the human race,—to come to the knowledge of the truth, that there are, and have always been, very many of the human race from whom He has withheld the means and the opportunity of knowing it. And from all this taken together, it plainly follows, that these statements contain no warrant whatever for the doctrine, that God desired and intended the salvation of all the individuals of our race, or that Christ gave Himself a ransom for them all.

There is one great and manifest advantage which the doctrine of a limited atonement possesses over the opposite doctrine, viewed with reference to the comparative facility with which the language of Scripture can be interpreted, so as to accord with it; and this is, that it is much more easy to understand and explain how, in accordance with the ordinary sentiments and practice of men, general or indefinite language may have been employed, when strict and proper universality was not meant, than to explain why limited or definite language should ever have been employed, if there was really no limitation in the object or destination of the atonement. The fair principle of interpretation is, to make the definite and limited statements the standard for explaining the general and indefinite ones, and not the reverse; especially as Scripture furnishes many examples in which all the unlimited expressions that are applied to the death of Christ, viewed in relation to its objects,—the world, the whole world, all, every, etc.,—are used, when no proper and absolute, but merely a relative or comparative, universality was intended.

In addition, however, to this general consideration, which is evidently of great weight and importance, the defenders of a limited atonement assert, and undertake to prove, not only that there are scriptural statements which cannot, by any fair process of interpretation, be reconciled with the doctrine of universal atonement, but also, that in all the passages in which Christ is spoken of as dying for the world, or for all, there is something in the passage or context which affords sufficient evidence that the *all* is not to be understood literally and absolutely as applicable to each and every individual of the human race, but with some restriction or limitation, according to the nature and relations of the

subject treated of, or the particular object for which the statement is made. This position is thus expressed by Turretine in his chapter on the object of Christ's satisfaction:\* "Nuspian Christus dicitur in Scriptura pro omnibus mortuus, quin ibidem addatur limitatio, ex quâ colligitur hoc non universaliter, de omnibus et singulis esse intelligendum, sed restricte pro subjectâ materiâ." And though this position may, at first sight, seem a bold and startling one, I have no doubt it can be established by an examination of ALL the particular passages referred to; and I have always regarded the ease and certainty with which, in most cases, this limitation can be pointed out and proved, and the fair and reasonable evidence that can be adduced of it, in all cases as affording a very strong general corroboration of the truth of our doctrine. In many of these general and unlimited statements, the object is manifestly to indicate *merely* that those for whom Christ died are not confined to any one nation, class, or description of men,—the world, or the whole world, evidently meaning mankind at large, Gentiles as well as Jews,—a truth which it was then peculiarly necessary to enforce, and to bring out in the fullest and strongest terms, in consequence of the abuse made of the selection of the Jews as God's peculiar people. In not a few, a limitation is plainly indicated in the context as implied in the nature, relations, or characteristics of the general subject treated of; and, in several instances, a careful examination of passages which, when superficially considered and judged of merely by the sound, seem to favour the idea of a universal atonement, not only shows that they afford it no real countenance, but furnishes strong presumptions, if not positive proofs, against it. I am persuaded that most men who had not examined the subject with care, and had had pressed upon their attention the collection of texts usually adduced by the defenders of a universal atonement, would be somewhat surprised to find how quickly they evaporated before even a cursory investigation; and how very small was the residuum that really involved any serious difficulty, or required anything like straining to bring out of them a meaning that was perfectly consistent with the doctrine of particular redemption.

The case is widely different with the attempt of our opponents to harmonize with their views the passages on which our doctrine

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\* Turretin., Loc. xiv., Qu. xiv., sec. xxxvi.

is more immediately founded. The more carefully they are examined, the more clearly will they be seen to carry ineradicably the idea of a limitation in the purpose or destination of the atonement, and of a firmly established and indissoluble connection between Christ's dying for men, and *these* men actually enjoying, in consequence, all spiritual blessings, and attaining ultimately to eternal salvation. And then, on the other hand, the attempts of our opponents to explain them, so as to make them consistent with the doctrine of universal atonement, are wholly unsuccessful. These attempts are commonly based, not on an examination of the particular passages themselves, or anything in their context and general scope, but upon mere indefinite and far-fetched considerations, which are not themselves sufficiently established to afford satisfactory solutions of other difficulties. Arminians commonly consider the passages which seem to indicate a limitation in the object of the atonement, as referring to the application, as distinguished and separated from the impetration or purchase of the blessings of redemption; while Calvinistic universalists usually regard them as referring to God's special design to secure the salvation of the elect, which they hold in combination with an alleged design or purpose to do something by means of a universal atonement, directed to the salvation of all men.

Now, independently of the consideration that these views of the two different classes of universalists are not themselves proved to be true, and cannot therefore be legitimately applied in this way, their application of them in this matter is liable to this fatal objection, that in Scripture it is the very same things which are predicated of men, both with and without a limitation. The state of the case is, not that the indications of limitation are exhibited when it is the application, and the indications of universality, when it is the impetration of spiritual blessings, that is spoken of; nor, the one, when something peculiar to the elect, and the other, when something common to mankind in general, is described. It is the same love of God to men, the same death of Christ, and the same ransom price paid for men, that are connected both with the limited and the unlimited phraseology. God *loved* the world, and Christ *loved* His church; Christ *died* for all, and He *died* for His sheep; He *gave Himself a ransom* for all, and He *gave Himself a ransom* for many; and there is no warrant whatever for alleging that, in the one case, the love, and the death, and the ransom are

descriptive of totally different things from what they describe in the other. The very same things are predicated of the two classes, the all and the sheep, the all and the many; and, *therefore*, the fair inference is, that *they are not really two different classes, but one and the same class*, somewhat differently described, and, of course, regarded under somewhat different aspects. The universalists, whether Arminians or Calvinists, do not predicate the same, but different things, of the two classes,—the all and the sheep, the all and the many,—while the Scripture predicates the same, and not different things, of both; and this consideration not only refutes the method of combining and harmonizing the various scriptural statements upon this subject adopted by our opponents, but shows the soundness and sufficiency of that which we propose. We say that Christ died, and gave His life a ransom for some men only,—those whom the Father had given Him; and not for all men,—that is, not for all the individuals of the human race, without exception,—but that those for whom He died are indeed all men, or mankind in general, without distinction of age or country, character or condition,—no class or description of men being excluded,—a sense in which we can prove that “all men” is often used in Scripture. And this combines in harmony the different statements which Scripture contains upon the subject; whereas the universalists are obliged, in order to harmonize scriptural statements, either to reject altogether the fair and natural meaning of those which represent Him as dying for some only, or else to maintain that He died for some men in one sense, and for all men, without exception, in a different sense; while they cannot produce, either from the particular passages, or from any other declarations of Scripture, evidence of the different senses in which they must understand the declarations, that He died for men, and gave Himself a ransom for them.\*

*Sec. X.—Extent of Atonement and Gospel Offer.*

Without dwelling longer upon this topic of the mode of interpreting particular passages of Scripture, I would now advert

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\* The question turns very much upon this point, Whether the two classes of passages teach two distinct and different truths, or can be, and should be, combined into one. *Vide* Wardlaw on the Nature and Extent of the Atonement, Dis. vi.; and Dr Candlish's Preliminary Dissertation.



briefly to some of the arguments for, and against, the doctrine of universal atonement, which are derived from more general considerations,—that is, from its consistency or inconsistency with other truths taught in Scripture, and with the general scheme of Scripture doctrine, or what is commonly called the analogy of faith.

By far the most important and plausible of the scriptural arguments in support of it, and the only one we mean to notice, is the alleged necessity of a universal atonement, or of Christ's having died for all men, as the only consistent ground or basis on which the offers and invitations of the gospel can be addressed indiscriminately to all men. We fully admit the general fact upon which the argument is based,—namely, that in Scripture, men, without distinction and exception, have salvation, and all that leads to it, offered or tendered to them,—that they are invited to come to Christ and to receive pardon,—and assured that all who accept the offer, and comply with the invitation, shall receive everything necessary for their eternal welfare. We fully admit that God in the Bible does all this, and authorizes and requires us to do the same in dealing with our fellow-men. Very few Calvinists have ever disputed the propriety and the obligation of addressing to men, indiscriminately, without distinction or exception, the offers and invitations of Gospel mercy; and the few who have fallen into error upon this subject,—such as Dr Gill, and some of the ultra-Calvinistic English Baptists of last century,—have usually based their refusal to offer to men indiscriminately pardon and acceptance, and to invite any or all to come to Christ that they might receive these blessings, upon the views they entertained, not about a limitation of the atonement, but about the entire depravity of human nature,—men's inability to repent and believe. This topic of the consistency of a limited atonement with the unlimited offers and invitations of gospel mercy, or of the alleged necessity of a universal atonement as the only ground or basis on which such offers and invitations can rest, has been very fully discussed. We can only suggest a few hints in regard to it.

There are obviously two questions that may be entertained upon this subject: First, Is an unlimited atonement necessary in order to warrant ministers of the gospel, or any who may be seeking to lead others to the saving knowledge of the truth, to

offer to men, without exception, pardon and acceptance, and to invite them to come to Christ? And, secondly, Is an unlimited atonement necessary in order to warrant God in addressing, and in authorizing and requiring us to address, such universal offers and invitations to our fellow-men? The neglect of keeping these two questions distinct, has sometimes introduced error and confusion into the discussion of this subject. It is the first question with which we have more immediately to do, as it affects a duty which we are called upon to discharge; while the second is evidently, from its very nature, one of those secret things which belong unto the Lord. It is very evident that our conduct, in preaching the gospel, and in addressing our fellow-men with a view to their salvation, should not be regulated by any inferences of our own about the nature, extent, and sufficiency of the provision actually made for saving them, but solely by the directions and instructions which God has given us, by precept or example, to guide us in the matter,—unless, indeed, we venture to act upon the principle of refusing to obey God's commands, until we fully understand all the grounds and reasons of them. God has commanded the gospel to be preached to every creature; He has required us to proclaim to our fellow-men, of whatever character, and in all varieties of circumstances, the glad tidings of great joy,—to hold out to them, in His name, pardon and acceptance through the blood of atonement,—to invite them to come to Christ, and to receive Him,—and to accompany all this with the assurance that “whosoever cometh to Him, He will in no wise cast out.” God's revealed will is the only rule, and ought to be held to be the sufficient warrant, for all that we do in this matter,—in deciding what is our duty,—in making known to our fellow-men what are their privileges and obligations,—and in setting before them reasons and motives for improving the one and discharging the other. And though this revelation does not warrant us in telling them that Christ died for all and each of the human race,—a mode of preaching the gospel never adopted by our Lord and His apostles,—yet it does authorize and enable us to lay before men views and considerations, facts and arguments, *which, in right reason*, should warrant and persuade all to whom they are addressed, to lay hold of the hope set before them,—to turn into the stronghold as prisoners of hope.

The second question, as to the conduct of God in this matter,

leads into much greater difficulties,—but difficulties which we are not bound, as we have no ground to expect to be able, to solve. The position of our opponents is, in substance, this,—that it was not possible for God, because not consistent with integrity and uprightness, to address such offers and invitations to men indiscriminately, unless an atonement, which is indispensable to salvation, had been presented and accepted on behalf of all men,—of each individual of the human race. Now, this position bears very manifestly the character of unwarranted presumption, and assumes our capacity of fully comprehending and estimating the eternal purposes of the divine mind,—the inmost grounds and reasons of the divine procedure. It cannot be proved,—because there is really not any clear and certain medium of probation,—that God, by offering to men indiscriminately, without distinction or exception, through Christ, pardon and acceptance, contradicts the doctrine which He has revealed to us in His own word, as to a limitation, not in the intrinsic sufficiency, but in the intended destination of the atonement. And unless this can be clearly and conclusively proved, we are bound to believe that they are consistent with each other, though we may not be able to perceive and develop this consistency, and, of course, to reject the argument of our opponents as untenable. When we carefully analyze all that is really implied in what God says and does, or authorizes and requires us to say and do in this matter, we can find much that is fitted to show positively that God does not, in offering pardon and acceptance to men indiscriminately, act inconsistently or deceptively, though it is not true that the atonement was universal. And it is easy to prove that He does no injustice to any one; since all who believe what He has revealed to them, and who do what He has given them sufficient motives or reasons for doing, will certainly obtain salvation. And although difficulties will still remain in the matter, which cannot be fully solved, it is easy to show that they just resolve into the one grand difficulty of all religion and of every system of theology,—that, namely, of reconciling, or rather of developing, the consistency between the supremacy and sovereignty of God, and the free agency and responsibility of man. In arguing with Calvinistic universalists, there is no great difficulty in showing that the principles on which they defend their Calvinistic views, upon other points, against Arminian objections, are equally available for defending

the doctrine of a limited atonement against the objection we are now considering ; and that the distinctions which they attempt to establish between the two cases are either altogether unfounded, or, if they have some truth and reality in them (as, for instance, that founded on the difference between natural and moral inability, — a distinction which seems to have been first fully developed by Cameron, and with a special view to this very point), do not go to the root of the matter,—do not affect the substance of the case,—and leave the grand difficulty, though slightly altered in the position it occupies, and in the particular aspect in which it is presented, as strong and formidable as ever.

Though the advocates of a universal atonement are accustomed to boast much of the support which, they allege, their doctrine derives from the scriptural statements about God's loving the world,—Christ's dying for all ; yet many of them are pretty well aware that they really have but little that is formidable to advance, except the alleged inconsistency of the doctrine of a limited atonement with the unlimited or indiscriminate offers of pardon and acceptance,—the unlimited or indiscriminate invitations and commands to come to Christ and to lay hold on Him,—which God addresses to men in His word, and which He has authorized and required us to address to our fellow-men. The distinction between the ground and warrant of men's act, and of God's act, in this matter, not only suggests materials for answering the arguments of opponents, but it also tends to remove a certain measure of confusion, or misconception, sometimes exhibited upon this point by the defenders of the truth. Some of them are accustomed to say, that the ground or warrant for the universal or unlimited offers of pardon, and commands to believe, is the infinite intrinsic sufficiency of Christ's atonement, which they generally hold, though denying its universal intended destination or efficiency ; while others profess to rest the universal offers and commands upon the simple authority of God in His word,—making them Himself, and requiring us to proclaim them to others.

Now, it is evident that these two things are not, as the language of some orthodox divines might lead us to suppose, contrasted with, or opposed to, each other. The sole ground or warrant for men's act, in offering pardon and salvation to their fellow-men, is the authority and command of God in His word. We have no other warrant than this ; we need no other ; and we should seek



or desire none; but on this ground alone should consider ourselves not only warranted, but bound, to proclaim to our fellow-men, whatever be their country, character, or condition, the good news of the kingdom, and to call upon them to come to Christ that they may be saved,—the Bible affording us sufficient, yea, abundant materials for convincing them that, in right reason, they ought to do this, and for assuring them that all who do, shall obtain eternal life. But this has manifestly nothing to do with the question, as to the ground or warrant of God's act, in making unlimited offers, and in authorizing us to make them.

In regard to the allegation often made by orthodox divines, that this act of God is warranted by, and is based upon, the infinite intrinsic sufficiency of Christ's atonement, we would only remark,—for we cannot enter into the discussion,—that we are not aware of any Scripture evidence that these two things,—namely, the universal intrinsic sufficiency and the unlimited offers,—are connected in this way,—that we have never been able to see how the assertion of this connection removed or solved the difficulty, or threw any additional light upon this subject,—and that, therefore, we think it best, while unhesitatingly doing ourselves, in our intercourse with our fellow-men, all that God's word authorizes and requires, to be contented with believing the general position,—that God in this, as in everything else, has chosen the best and wisest means of accomplishing all that He really intended to effect; and to be satisfied,—so far as the objection of opponents is concerned,—with showing, *that it cannot be proved* that there is any inconsistency or insincerity, that there is any injustice or deception, on God's part, in anything which He says or does in this matter, even though the intended destination of the atonement was to effect and secure the forgiveness and salvation of the elect only,—even though He did not design or purpose, by sending His Son into the world, to save any but those who are saved.

*Sec. XI.—Extent of Atonement, and its Object.*

We must now notice the arguments *against* the doctrine of universal atonement derived from doctrines or principles taught in Scripture, as distinguished from particular scriptural statements bearing immediately upon the precise point; leaving out of view, however, in the meantime, and in the first instance, for reasons

formerly stated, the arguments derived from its inconsistency with the doctrine of election, or any of what are commonly reckoned the peculiarities of Calvinism. The leading scriptural arguments against the doctrine of universal atonement, in the sense and with the limitation just explained, are these: First, that it is inconsistent with the scriptural account of the proper nature, and immediate objects and effects, of the sufferings and death of Christ, as a vicarious atonement; and, secondly, that it is inconsistent with the scriptural account of the invariable and certain connection between the impetration or purchase, and the application to men individually, of all spiritual blessings. The second general argument admits of being broken down into several different divisions, or distinct positions, each of which can be established by its own appropriate scriptural evidence,—as, first, that “the oblation or sacrifice and intercession of Christ are one entire means respecting the accomplishment of the same proposed end, and have the same personal object,”—a proposition elaborately established by Dr Owen, whose words I have adopted in stating it;\* and, secondly, that the operation of the Holy Spirit, in producing faith and regeneration in men individually, and faith and regeneration themselves, viewed as the gifts of God, are the fruits of Christ’s satisfaction and obedience, and are conferred upon all in whose room He suffered and died. If these doctrines be true, they manifestly preclude the idea of an atonement that was universal, unlimited, or indefinite in its destination or intended objects and effects. But I will not dwell upon any of this class of topics, though they are very important,—and will only make some observations upon the inconsistency of the doctrine of an unlimited atonement, with scriptural views of the proper nature and immediate objects and effects of Christ’s death, in further illustration of the important principle, which has been repeatedly adverted to,—namely, that the nature of the atonement settles or determines the question of its extent.

The plan usually adopted by the universalists in discussing this fundamental department of the subject, is to lay down an arbitrary definition of what atonement means in general, or in the abstract, and of what are the kinds of purposes it was intended to serve; and this definition of theirs usually amounts, in substance,

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\* Owen, Death of Christ, Book i., chaps. vii. viii.

to something of this sort,—namely, that an atonement is an expedient, or provision,—any expedient or provision,—whereby the great ends of law and government may be promoted and secured, without its being necessary to inflict the penalty of the law upon those who had incurred it by transgression; thus removing obstacles and opening a door to their being pardoned. If this definition really embraced *all* that the Scripture makes known to us concerning the nature and immediate objects of the atonement of Christ, then it might possibly be universal or unlimited; for, according to this view, it was fitted and intended only to make the pardon and salvation of sinners possible,—to leave it free and open to God to pardon any or all of them, as He might choose.

Now, we do not say that this definition of an atonement, as applied to the death of Christ, is false; though some of the terms in which it is usually embodied—such as an expedient—are not very suitable or becoming. It is, in substance, a true description of the death of Christ, so far as it goes,—just as the Socinian view of it, as a testimony and an example, is true. The definition to which we have referred is really suggested by *some* scriptural views of what the death of Christ was, and of what it was intended to effect. And it accords also with some of the analogies suggested by human government and laws. What we maintain upon this point is, that it does not present a full and complete definition or description of the nature and immediate objects of the death of Christ, as they are represented to us in Scripture; and that therefore it is altogether unwarrantable to lay it down as the definition of an atonement, by which we are to judge—for this is practically the application the universalists make of their definition—of what an atonement must be, and of what views we ought to take of Christ's death. The analogies suggested by the principles of human government, and the applications of human laws,—though they are not without their use in illustrating this matter,—must be very imperfect. The death of One, who was at once a possessor of the divine nature, and at the same time a perfectly holy and innocent man, and whose death was intended to effect the salvation of men who, by transgression, had become subject to the wrath and curse of God, must necessarily be altogether unique and *sui generis*, and must not be estimated or judged of by any antecedent conceptions, or comprehended in any arbitrary definitions of ours. We can comprehend it only by taking in the whole of

the information which Scripture communicates to us regarding it ; we can define and describe it aright only by embodying all the elements which have scriptural warrant or sanction. *An atonement is just that, be it what it may, which the death of Christ was ;* and the proper definition of an atonement is that which takes in *all*, and not only *some*, of the aspects in which the death of Christ is actually presented to us in Scripture. That it was a great provision for securing the ends of government and law, even while transgressors were pardoned and saved,—that it embodies and exhibits most impressive views of the perfections of God, of the excellence of His law, and of the sinfulness of sin,—that it affords grounds and reasons on which transgressors may be pardoned and saved, while yet the great principles of God's moral government are maintained, and its ends are secured ;—all this is true and important, but all this does not exhaust the scriptural views of the death of Christ, and therefore it should not be set forth as constituting *the* definition of an atonement. The Scripture tells us something more than all this, by giving more definite and specific information concerning the true nature of Christ's death, and the way and manner in which, *from its very nature*, it is fitted to effect, and does effect, its immediate intended objects. These considerations may be of some use in leading us to be on our guard against the policy usually pursued by the universalists, in paving the way for the introduction of their views, and providing for themselves a shield against objections, by laying down an arbitrary and defective definition of an atonement.

The two leading ideas, which are admitted to be involved in the doctrine of the atonement by almost all who repudiate Socinian views, are—as we formerly explained at length—substitution and satisfaction. And the substance of what we maintain upon the subject now under consideration is just this,—that these two ideas, when understood in the sense in which Scripture warrants and requires us to understand them, and when clearly and distinctly realized, instead of being diluted and explained away, preclude and disprove the doctrine of a universal atonement. Substitution—or taking the place and acting in the room and stead of others—naturally and obviously suggests the notion, that those others, whose place was taken—in whose room or stead something was done or suffered—*were a distinct and definite class of persons*, who were conceived of, and contemplated individually, and not a mere



indefinite mass indiscriminately considered. Mediation, or interposition in behalf of others, understood in a general and indefinite sense, without any specification of the nature or kind of the mediation or interposition, may respect a mass of men, viewed indiscriminately and in the gross; but mediation or interposition, in the form, or by means of substitution in their room, or taking their place, naturally suggests the idea that certain particular men were contemplated, whose condition and circumstances individually were known, and whose benefit individually was aimed at. This idea is thus expressed by Witsius: \* “Neque fieri nobis ullo modo posse videtur, ut quis Christum pro omnibus et singulis hominibus mortuum ex animi sententia contendat, nisi prius enervata phrasi illa *pro aliquo mori*, quâ substitutionem in locum alterius notari nuper contra Socinianos evicimus.” Witsius thought that no man could honestly and intelligently contend for the truth of the doctrine, that Christ had died for all men, until he had first enervated or explained away what was implied in the phrase, of dying in the room and stead of another; and there is much in the history of theological discussion to confirm this opinion.

This extract, however, from Witsius, reminds us that the doctrine of the atonement, as maintained against the Socinians, includes the idea, not only of substitution, but also of satisfaction; and the examination of this notion affords clearer and more explicit evidence that Christ did not die for all men, or for any who ultimately perish. If anything be really established in opposition to the Socinians upon this subject, it is this,—that Christ not only took the place, or substituted Himself in the room and stead of sinners, but that He suffered and died in their room and stead,—that is, that He suffered what was due to them, and what, but for His suffering it in their stead, they must have endured. Of course we do not found upon the idea,—for, as we have already explained, we do not believe it to be true,—that Christ’s sufferings, *in point of amount and extent*, were just adequate to satisfy for the sins of a certain number of persons. We have no doubt that He would have endured no more, though many more had been to be saved. Still, His sufferings were the endurance of a penal infliction. And they were the endurance of the penalty which men had incurred,—of that penalty itself, or of a full equivalent for it, in point of

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\* De Œcon. Fœd., Lib. ii., c. ix., s. 1.

legal worth or value, and not of a mere substitute for it, as the universalists commonly allege. The law, which men had broken, appointed a penalty to each of them individually,—a penalty to the infliction of which each was individually liable. And unless the law was to be wholly relaxed or set aside, there must, for each individual who had transgressed, be the compliance with the law's demands,—that is, the infliction of this penalty, either upon himself, or on a substitute acting—qualified to act—and accepted as acting, in his room and stead. The transgression was personal, and so must be the infliction of the penalty. If the transgression, and the corresponding infliction of the penalty, were in their nature personal, and had respect to men individually, so, in like manner, must any transactions or arrangements that might be contemplated and adopted with a view *to the transference of the penalty*; so that, it being borne by another, those in whose room He bore it might escape unpunished, the law being satisfied by another suffering the penalty which it prescribed in their stead.

The Scripture, however, not only represents Christ, in suffering and dying, as substituting Himself in our room,—as enduring the penalty which we had incurred, and must otherwise have endured,—and as thus satisfying the divine justice and law in our stead; but also as thereby reconciling men to God, or purchasing for them reconciliation and pardon. This, the direct and immediate effect of the death of Christ, in its bearing upon men's condition, naturally and necessarily suggests the idea of a distinct and definite number of persons in whose behalf it was effected, and who are at length certainly to receive it. It is not reconciliability, but reconciliation, that the Scripture represents as the immediate object or effect of Christ's death; and this implies a personal change in the relation of men individually to God. And it is no sufficient reason for explaining this away, as meaning something far short of the natural and obvious import of the words, that men individually were not reconciled when Christ died, but receive reconciliation and pardon individually during their abode upon earth, according as God is pleased effectually to call them. We assume,—as we are fully warranted in doing,—that reconciliation with God and forgiveness of sin, wherever they are possessed and enjoyed, in any age or country, stand in the same relation to the death of Christ, as the reconciliation and pardon which the apostles enjoyed, are represented by them as

doing; and that is, that they were immediately procured or purchased by it, and that their application, in due time, to all for whom they were purchased, was effectually secured by it. If this be the relation subsisting between the death of Christ and the reconciliation and pardon of sinners, He must, in dying, have contemplated, and provided for, the actual reconciliation and pardon of men individually,—that is, of all those, and of those only, who ultimately receive these blessings, whatever other steps or processess may intervene before they are actually put in possession of them.

The leading peculiar views generally held by Arminians,—at least those of them who bring out their views most fully and plainly,—are, as we formerly explained,—these: first, that they do not regard Christ as suffering the penalty due to sinners, nor even a full equivalent—an adequate compensation—for it, but only a substitute for it; secondly, that there was a relaxation of the law in the forgiveness of sinners, not merely in regard to the person suffering, but also the penalty suffered, since it was not even in substance executed; and, thirdly, that the direct immediate effect of Christ's death was not to procure for men reconciliation and pardon, but merely to remove legal obstacles, and to open a door for God bestowing these blessings on any men, or all men. These views they seem to have been led to adopt by their doctrine about the universality of an atonement; and as the universality of the atonement naturally leads to those methods of explaining, or rather explaining away, its nature,—its relation to the law, and its immediate object and effect,—the establishment and application of the true scriptural views of substitution, satisfaction, and reconciliation, as opposed to the three Arminian doctrines upon these points stated above, exclude or disprove its universality,—or its *intended* destination to any but those who are ultimately pardoned and saved. Substitution, satisfaction, and reconciliation may be so explained,—that is, may be wrapped up in such vague and ambiguous generalities,—as to suggest no direct reference to particular men, considered individually, as the objects contemplated and provided for in the process; but the statements of Scripture, when we carefully investigate their meaning, and realize the ideas which they convey,—and which they *must* convey, unless we are to sink down to Socinianism,—bring these topics before us in aspects which clearly imply that Christ sub-

stituted Himself in the room of some men, and not of all men,—that all for whose sins He made satisfaction to the divine justice and law, certainly receive reconciliation and pardon,—and that, when they do receive them, they are bestowed upon each of them on the ground that Christ suffered in *his* room and stead, expiated *his sins* upon the cross, and thereby effectually secured *his* eternal salvation, and everything that this involves.

It has been very ably and ingeniously argued, in opposition to the doctrine of universal atonement, and especially in favour of the consistency of the unlimited offers of the gospel with a limited atonement, that the thing that is offered to men in the gospel is just that which they actually receive, and become possessed of, when they individually accept the offer; and that this is nothing vague and indefinite,—not a mere possibility and capacity,—but real, actual reconciliation and pardon. This is true, and very important; but the process of thought on which the argument is based, might be carried further back, even into the very heart and essential nature of the atonement, in this way. What men receive when they are individually united to Christ by faith,—that is, actual reconciliation and pardon,—is that which is offered or tendered to them before they believe. But that which is offered to them before they believe, is just that which Christ impetrated or purchased for them; and what it was that Christ impetrated or purchased for them depends upon what was the true nature and character of His death. And if His death was indeed a real satisfaction to the divine justice and law in men's room, by being the endurance in their stead of the penalty due to them,—and *in this way* affording ground or reason for treating them as if they had never broken the law, or as if they had fully borne in their own persons the penalty which it prescribed,—we can thus trace through the whole process by which sinners are admitted into the enjoyment of God's favour, *a necessary reference to* particular men considered individually, a firm and certain provision for the reconciliation and pardon of all for whom, or in whose stead, Christ died, for purchasing redemption only for those who were to be ultimately saved, and, of course, for applying its blessings to all for whom they were designed.

Those more strict and definite views of substitution, satisfaction, and reconciliation, which thus exclude and disprove an unlimited or indefinite atonement, that did not respect particular men, viewed individually, while clearly sanctioned by scriptural state-



ments, can also be shown to be necessarily involved in the full and consistent development, even of those more defective views which the universalists would substitute in their room. The death of Christ, according to them, operates upon men's relation to God and their eternal welfare, not by its being an endurance of the penalty of the law in their room, and thus satisfying divine justice, but merely by its being suffering inflicted *vice pœnæ*, as we saw in Limborch, or as a substitute for the penalty; and as thus presenting certain views of God's character, government, and law, which, when impressed upon men's minds, would prevent any erroneous views, or any injurious consequences, arising from their sins being pardoned. Now,—not to dwell again upon the serious objection to this principle, when set forth as a *full* account of the doctrine of the atonement, from its involving no provision whatever for the actual exercise, but only for the apparent outward manifestation, of the divine perfections,—it is important to notice, that it is not easy to see how the death of Christ is fitted to produce the requisite impressions, unless it be really regarded in the light in which Scripture represents it, as the endurance of the penalty of the law in our room and stead. In order to serve the purposes ascribed to it, as an expedient of government, by producing certain impressions upon men's minds, it must unfold the holiness and justice of God,—the perfection and unchangeableness of His law,—and the exceeding sinfulness and infinite danger of sin. Now, it is not merely true, as we contend, in opposition to the Socinians, that these impressions can be produced, and the corresponding results can be accomplished, only by an atonement,—only by substitution and satisfaction, understood in some vague and indefinite sense,—but also that, in order to this, there must be true substitution, and real and proper satisfaction. The justice and holiness of God are very imperfectly, if at all, manifested, by His inflicting some suffering upon a holy and innocent person, in order that sinners might escape, unless that person were acting, and had consented to act, strictly as the surety and substitute of those who were to receive the benefit of His sufferings.

There is certainly no manifestation of the excellence and perfection of the divine law, or of the necessity of maintaining and honouring it, if, in the provision made for pardoning sinners, it was relaxed and set aside,—if its penalty was not inflicted,—if there was no fulfilment of its exactions, no compliance with its

demands. It is only when we regard the death of Christ in its true scriptural character, and include, in our conceptions of it, those more strict and definite views of substitution and satisfaction, which exclude the doctrine of universal atonement, that we can see, in the pardon of sinners, and in the provision made for effecting it, the whole combined glory of God's moral character, as it is presented to us in the general statements of Scripture, and that we can be deeply impressed with right conceptions of the perfection of the divine law, and of the honour and reverence that are unchangeably due to it. The notion, then, that the atonement operates upon the forgiveness of sinners, merely by its being a great display of the principles of God's moral government,—and this is the favourite idea in the present day of those who advocate a universal atonement,—is not only liable to the fatal objection of its giving defective, and, to some extent, positively erroneous views of the nature of the atonement, as it is represented to us in Scripture, but is, moreover, so far from being fitted to be a substitute for, and to supersede the stricter views of, substitution and satisfaction, that it cannot stand by itself,—that nothing can really be made of it, unless those very views which it was designed to supersede are assumed as the ground or basis on which it rests.

I had occasion to mention before, that there was a considerable difference in the degree to which the Arminians allowed their doctrine of the extent of the atonement to affect their representations and dilutions of its nature and immediate object, and that they usually manifested more soundness upon this subject when contending against the Socinians, than when attacking the Calvinists. It has also generally held true, that Calvinistic universalists have not gone quite so far in explaining away the true nature of the atonement as the Arminians have done. They have, however, generally given sufficiently plain indications of the perverting and injurious influence of the doctrine of universal atonement upon right views of its nature, and never perhaps so fully as in the present day. There are men in the present day, who still profess to hold Calvinistic doctrines upon some points, who have scarcely left anything in the doctrine of the atonement which a Socinian would think it worth his while to oppose. I do not now refer to those who are popularly known amongst us by the name of Morisonians; for though they began with merely asserting the univer-

sality of the atonement, they made very rapid progress in their descent from orthodoxy; and though of but a very few years' standing *under this designation*, they have long since renounced everything Calvinistic, and may be justly regarded as now teaching a system of gross, unmitigated Pelagianism. There are others, however, both in this country and in the United States, who, while still professing to hold some Calvinistic doctrines, have carried out so fully and so far their notion of the atonement being not a proper substitution or satisfaction, but a mere display, adapted to serve the purposes of God's moral government, that it would really make no very essential difference in their general scheme of theology, if they were to renounce altogether the divinity of our Saviour, and to represent His death merely as a testimony and an example.

Perhaps it is but just and fair to be somewhat more explicit and personal upon this point, and to say plainly whom, among the defenders of a universal atonement in our own day, I mean,—and whom I do not mean,—to comprehend in this description. I mean to comprehend in it such writers as Dr Beman in America, and Dr Jenkyn in this country; and I do not mean to comprehend in it Dr Wardlaw and Dr Payne, and writers who agree in defending, in their way, the doctrine of a universal atonement. Dr Beman and Dr Jenkyn both teach, that the death of Christ was a mere substitute for the penalty which the law had prescribed, and which men had incurred; and that it operates upon the forgiveness of men's sins, not by its being a proper satisfaction to the divine justice and law, but merely by its being a display of principles, the impression of which upon men's minds is fitted to promote and secure the great ends of God's moral government, while they are receiving the forgiveness of their sins, and are admitted into the enjoyment of God's favour. Dr Wardlaw, on the contrary, has always asserted the substance of the scriptural doctrine of the atonement, as involving the ideas of substitution and satisfaction; and has thus preserved and maintained one important and fundamental branch of scriptural truth, in the defence of which, indeed, against the Socinians, he has rendered important services to the cause of scriptural doctrine. The injurious tendency of the doctrine of universal or unlimited atonement upon his views of its nature (for it will be recollected, that I at present leave out of view the connection between this doctrine and the peculiarities of the Calvinistic system), appear chiefly in

these respects: first, the exaggerated importance which he sometimes attributes to the mere manifestation of the general principles of the divine moral government, as distinguished from the actual exercise of the divine perfections, and the actual fulfilment and enforcement of the divine law, in the great process adopted for pardoning and saving sinners; and, secondly, in occasional indications of dissatisfaction with some of the more strict and definite views of substitution and satisfaction, without any very distinct specification of what it is in these views to which he objects.\* It is not, indeed, to be supposed, that these statements bring out the *whole* of the perverting influence of the doctrine of universal atonement upon Dr Wardlaw's views on this subject; for, while this is the whole extent to which he has developed its effects upon his views of *the proper nature and immediate effect* of the atonement, he of course supports the important error (as every one who holds an unlimited atonement must do), that Christ, by dying, did not purchase or merit faith and regeneration for His people; and that, consequently, so far as depended upon anything that the atonement effected or secured, all men might have perished, even though Christ died to save them. But it must be recollected, that this department, too, of the subject I set aside, as one on the discussion of which I should not enter, confining myself to some illustration of the inconsistency of the doctrine of universal atonement, with right views of the nature and immediate effect of the atonement, and of its powerful tendency to lead men who, in the main, hold scriptural views upon these subjects, to dilute them or explain them away.

It is very common for men who hold loose and erroneous views in regard to substitution and satisfaction, to represent the stricter and more definite views of these subjects, which are necessarily connected with the doctrine of a limited atonement, as leading to Antinomianism. But there is no great difficulty in defending them against this objection; for it is easy enough to show that the highest and strictest views upon these points, which have received the sanction of Calvinists, do not afford any ground for the general position that the law is abrogated or set aside, even in regard to believers,—and are perfectly consistent

\* On the second point, *vide* Wardlaw's Discourses on Nature and Extent of Atonement.—Review of Reviews in

Preface to Second Edition, pp. 41, 55, 83, 87.



with the truth that they are still subject to its obligation, as a rule of life, though they are not under it “as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified or condemned;” \* while it can also be easily shown that they afford no countenance to the notions of some men—who approximate to Antinomianism—about the eternal justification of the elect, or their justification, at least, from the time when the sacrifice of Christ in their room was first accepted,—notions sufficiently refuted by these general positions: first, that the substitution and satisfaction of Christ form part of a great and consistent scheme, all the parts of which are fitted to, and indissolubly linked with, each other; and, secondly, that it is one of the provisions of this great scheme, that, to adopt the language of our Confession, † though “God did, from all eternity, decree to justify all the elect; and Christ did, in the fulness of time, die for their sins, and rise again for their justification: nevertheless they are not justified, until the Holy Spirit doth in due time actually apply Christ unto them.”

*Sec. XII.—Extent of Atonement, and Calvinistic Principles.*

We have considered the subject of the extent of the atonement solely in connection with the scriptural statements bearing upon this particular point,—and in connection with the views taught us generally in Scripture with regard to the nature, objects, and effects of the atonement itself,—without much more than merely incidental allusions to the connection between this and the *other* doctrines that are usually controverted between the Calvinists and the Arminians. We have adopted this course, because we were anxious to show that the doctrine of particular redemption,—or of an atonement limited in its destination, though not in its intrinsic sufficiency,—which is commonly reckoned the weakest part of the Calvinistic system, and seems to be regarded by many as having no foundation to rest upon *except* its accordance with the other doctrines of Calvinism,—is quite capable of standing upon its own proper merits,—upon its own distinct and independent evidence,—without support from the other doctrines which have been commonly held in combination with it. It is proper, however, to point out more distinctly, as a not unimportant sub-

\* Confession, c. xix., s. 6.

† C. xi., s. 4.

ject of investigation,—though we can do little more than point it out,—the bearing of this doctrine upon some of the other departments of the Calvinistic or Arminian controversy.

The Arminians are accustomed to argue in this way: Christ died for all men,—that is, with a purpose, design, or intention of saving all men; leaving it, of course, to the free will of each man individually to determine whether or not he will concur with this purpose of God, embrace the provision, and be saved. And if Christ died for all men, then it follows that there could not be any eternal decree by which some men were chosen to life, and others passed by and left to perish. Thus, upon the alleged universality of the atonement, they founded a distinct and independent argument against the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination; and this argument, as I formerly had occasion to mention, is strongly urged by Curcellæus and Limborch, and others of the ablest Arminian writers. The Calvinists meet this argument by asserting that Christ did not die for all men, but only for some, in the sense in which I have had occasion to explain these statements; and by establishing this position on its own proper evidence, they not only refute the argument against predestination, but bring out an additional confirmation of its truth. All this is plain enough, so far as the general sequence and connection of the argument is concerned. But the question occurs, What do the Calvinistic universalists make of it? They believe that Christ died for all men, and they also believe in the eternal, absolute election of some men to salvation. Of course they are bound to maintain that these two things are consistent with each other, and on *this* particular point,—namely, the consistency of these two doctrines,—they have both the Arminians and the great body of the Calvinists to contend against; for Calvinists, in general, have admitted that, if the Arminians could establish their position, that Christ died for all men, the conclusion of the falsehood of the Calvinistic doctrine of election could not be successfully assailed.

The way in which this matter naturally and obviously presents itself to the mind of a believer in the doctrine of election is this,—and it is fully accordant with Scripture,—that God must be conceived of as, first, desiring to save some of the lost race of men, and electing or choosing out those whom He resolved to save,—a process which Scripture uniformly ascribes to the good

pleasure of His will, and to no other cause whatever; and *then*,—that is, according to our mode of conceiving of the subject, for there can be no real succession of time in the infinite mind,—decreeing, as the great mean in order to the attainment of this end, and in consistency with His perfections, law, and government, to send His Son to seek and save them,—to suffer and die in their room and stead. The mission of His Son, and all that flowed from it, we are thus to regard as a result or consequence of God's having chosen some men to everlasting life, and thus adopting the best and wisest means of executing this decree, of carrying this purpose into effect. If this be anything like the true state of the case, then it is plain that God never had any real design or purpose to save all men,—or to save any but those who are saved; and that His design or purpose of saving the elect continued to exist and to operate during the whole process,—regulating the divine procedure throughout, and determining the end and object contemplated in sending Christ into the world, and in laying our iniquities upon Him. This view of the matter, Calvinists, in general, regard as fully sanctioned by the statements of Scripture, and as fully accordant with the dictates of right reason, exercised upon all that we learn from Scripture, or from any other source, with respect to the divine perfections and government. The course which the Calvinistic universalists usually adopt in discussing this point,—in order to show, at once against the Arminians, that, notwithstanding the admitted universality of the atonement, the doctrine of election may be true, and to show, against the generality of Calvinists, that, notwithstanding the admitted doctrine of election, the universality of the atonement may be true,—is this, they try to show that we should conceive of God as *first* decreeing to send His Son into the world to suffer and die for all men, so as to make the salvation of all men possible, and to lay a foundation for tendering it to them all; and then, foreseeing that all men would reject this provision, if left to themselves, decreeing to give to some men, chosen from the human race in general, faith and repentance, by which *their* salvation might be secured.

Now, the discussion of these topics involves an investigation of some of the most difficult and abstruse questions connected with the subject of predestination; and on these we do not at present enter. We would only remark, that the substance of the

answer given to these views of the Calvinistic universalists, may be embodied in these positions,—leaving out the general denial of the universality of the atonement, which is not just the precise point at present under consideration, though sufficient of itself, if established, to settle it.—First, that the general will or purpose to save all men conditionally is inconsistent with scriptural views of the divine perfections,—of the general nature and operation of the divine decrees,—and of the principles by which the actual salvation of men individually is determined; and really amounts, in substance, to a virtual, though not an intentional, betrayal of the true Calvinistic doctrine of election into the hands of its enemies. Secondly, and more particularly, that this method of disposing and arranging the order of the divine decrees,—that is, according to our mode of conceiving of them, in making the decree to send Christ to die for men, *precede* the decree electing certain men for whom He was to die, and whom, by dying, He was certainly to save,—is inconsistent with what Scripture indicates upon this subject. This is, indeed, in substance, just the question which used to be discussed between the Calvinists and the Arminians upon the point,—whether or not Christ is the cause and foundation of the decree of election—the Arminians maintaining that He is, and the Calvinists that He is not,—a question of some intricacy, but of considerable importance, in its bearing upon the subject of election generally, which will be found discussed and *settled* in Turretine,\* on the decrees of God and predestination. I may also observe, that, in the last Quæstio of the same Locus,† under the head of the *order* of the decrees of God in predestination, there is a very masterly exposure of the attempts of Calvinistic universalists to reconcile their doctrine, in regard to the extent of the atonement, with the doctrine of election, by deviating from what Calvinists have generally regarded as the right method of arranging the order of the divine decrees,—according to our mode of conceiving of them,—by representing atonement as *preceding* election in the divine purpose; and, what is very interesting and instructive, his arguments fully meet and dispose of all the grounds taken by the best writers on the opposite side in our own day. In the portion of this Quæstio to which I more immediately refer, he is arguing, of course, with the school

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\* Turretin. Loc. iv., Quæst. x.

† Quæst. xviii.



of Cameron and Amyraldus,—the hypothetic or conditional universalists, as they were generally called by the divines of the seventeenth century. Of the various and discordant parties composing the defenders of unlimited atonement in our own day, Dr Wardlaw is the one whose views most entirely concur with those of the founders of that school. His views, indeed, exactly coincide with theirs,—he has deviated no further from sound doctrine than they did, and not nearly so far as most of the modern defenders of an unlimited atonement. Accordingly, the statement which Turretine gives of the views and arguments of those who defended universal atonement, in combination with election, embodies the whole substance of what Dr Wardlaw has adduced in defence of his principles, in his work on the nature and extent of the atonement,—and the argument is put at least as ably and as plausibly as it has ever been since; while Turretine, in examining it, has conclusively answered all that Dr Wardlaw has adduced, or that any man could adduce, to reconcile the doctrine of an unlimited atonement with the Calvinistic doctrine of election.\*

I think it useful to point out such illustrations of the important truth, that almost all errors in theology,—some of them occasionally eagerly embraced as novelties or great discoveries when they happen to be revived,—were discussed and *settled* by the great theologians of the seventeenth century.

There is only one point in the representations and arguments of Calvinistic universalists, to which I can advert more particularly. It is the practice of describing the atonement as intended for, and applicable to, all; and representing the whole speciality of the case, with reference to results, as lying, not in the atonement itself, but merely in the application which God, in His sovereignty, resolved or decreed to make, and does make, of it; and then calling upon us, with the view of giving greater plausibility to this representation, to conceive of, and to estimate, the atonement *by itself*, and *wholly apart* from its application,—or, from the election of God, which, they admit, determined its application, to individuals. Now, this demand is unreasonable,—it implies misconception, and it is fitted to lead to greater misconception.

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\* Loc. iv., Qu. xviii., s. xiii. Wardlaw, pp. 77-92.

Our duty, of course, is just to contemplate the atonement, as it is actually presented to us in Scripture, in all the connections and relations in which it stands. We know nothing of the atonement but what the Bible makes known to us; and, in order to know it aright, we must view it just as the Bible represents it. The scheme of salvation is a great system of purposes and actings, on the part of God, or of truths and doctrines which unfold to us these purposes and actings. The series of things, which are done and revealed with a view to the salvation of lost men, constitute a great and harmonious system,—devised, superintended, and executed by infinite wisdom and power, and complete in all its parts, which work together for the production of glorious results. And when we attempt to take this scheme to pieces, and to separate what God has joined together, we are in great danger of being left to follow our own devices, and to fall into error, especially if we do not take care to base our full and final conclusions, in regard to any one department of the scheme, upon a general survey of the whole. We admit that the atonement, viewed by itself, is just vicarious suffering, of infinite worth and value, and, of course, intrinsically sufficient to expiate the sins of all men. There is no dispute about this point. This admission does not satisfy our opponents, and does not in the least incommode us. The question in dispute turns upon the destination or intended object, not the intrinsic sufficiency, of the atonement. We cannot conceive of anything intermediate between intrinsic sufficiency on the one hand, and actual or intended application on the other. The actual application of the atonement extends to those only who believe and are forgiven. And Calvinists,—although they may think it convenient, for controversial purposes, to argue for a time, as Dr Wardlaw does, upon the supposition of atonement without election,—*must* admit that this actual application of the atonement was, in each case, foreseen and fore-ordained. There could be no *intended* application of the atonement, contrary, or in opposition, to that which is actually made, and made because it was intended from eternity. The doctrine of the atonement may be said to consist of its intrinsic sufficiency and of its intended application. These two heads exhaust it; and when men hold up what they call the atonement, *per se*, viewed by itself, and apart from its application, and yet will not admit that this description corresponds to, and is exhausted by, its infinite intrinsic sufficiency,

they *must* mean by this,—for there is no medium,—an *intended application* of the atonement different from the application that is in fact made of it, in actually pardoning and saving men. But this is manifestly *not* the atonement, *per se*, viewed by itself, and apart from its application; so that the supposition on which they are fond of arguing has really no meaning or relevancy, and tends only to perplex the subject, and to involve in doubt and obscurity the sovereign election of God in the salvation of sinners.

The truth is, that the atonement, apart from its application, actual or intended, cannot be conceived of in any other sense than with reference merely to its intrinsic sufficiency; and the question truly in dispute really amounts, in substance, to this,—whether, besides the actual application of the atonement to some men, in their actual pardon and acceptance,—which, of course, our Calvinistic opponents must admit to have been intended and fore-ordained,—there was a different *intended*, though never realized, application of it to all men,—some design, purpose, or intention, on God's part, of saving all men through its means. And it was just because the question really turned, not upon anything we know, or can know, about the atonement viewed in itself, and apart from its application, but upon the purpose or design of God in giving His Son, and of Christ in giving Himself, for men, that the whole subject was frequently discussed, in the seventeenth century, under the head of universal grace,—that is, the universal love or kindness of God, in designing and providing, by sending His Son into the world, for the salvation of all men; and I am persuaded that it is chiefly from overlooking the consideration, that the whole question does, and must, turn upon the purpose, or design, of God and Christ in the matter, and the consequent destination of what they did,—and from getting themselves entangled in the consideration of what they call the atonement *per se*,—that any men who hold the doctrine of election have succeeded in persuading themselves of the universality of the atonement. The investigation of the will or decree—the purpose or design—of God, in the matter, belongs properly to the head of predestination; and under that head Calvinistic divines have fully proved that no such will, purpose, or design, to save all men, as the doctrine of universal atonement necessarily implies, can be reconciled with what is taught in Scripture, and confirmed by right reason, with respect to the divine decrees.

The history of theology affords abundant evidence of the tendency of the doctrine of universal atonement to distort and pervert men's views of the scheme of divine truth, though, of course, this tendency has been realized in very different degrees. There have been some theologians in whose minds the doctrine seemed to lie, without developing itself, to any very perceptible extent, in the production of any other error. With these persons, the doctrine, that Christ died for all men, seems to have been little or nothing more than just the particular form or phraseology in which they embodied the important truth of the warrant and obligation to preach the gospel to every creature,—to invite and require men, without distinction or exception, to come to Christ, and to embrace Him, that they might receive pardon, acceptance, and eternal life. In such cases, the error really amounts to little more than a certain inaccuracy of language, accompanied with some indistinctness or confusion of thought. Still it should not be forgotten that all error is dangerous, and that *this* is a point where, as experience shows, error is peculiarly apt to creep in, in subtle and insidious disguises, and to extend its ravages more widely over the field of Christian truth, than even the men who cherish it may, for a time, be themselves aware of.

The first and most direct tendency of this doctrine is to lead men to dilute and explain away—as I have illustrated at length—the scriptural statements with respect to the true nature and import of the substitution and satisfaction of Christ, and their bearing upon the redemption and reconciliation of sinners. And this introduces serious error into a most fundamental department of Christian truth. There are men, indeed, who, while holding the doctrine of universal atonement, still make a sound profession in regard to the true nature and immediate effects of Christ's death. But this is only because they do not fully comprehend their own principles, and follow them out consistently; and, of course, their tenure even of the truth they hold rests upon a very insecure foundation. But the progress of error in many cases does not stop here. The idea very naturally occurs to men, that, if Christ died for all the human race, then some provision must have been made for bringing within all men's reach, and making accessible to them, the privileges or opportunities which have been thus procured for them. And as a large portion of the human race are, undoubtedly, left in entire ignorance of



Christ, and of all that He has done for them, some universalists have been led, not very unnaturally, to maintain the position,—that men may be, and that many have been, saved through Christ, or on the ground of His atonement, who never heard of Him, to whom the gospel was never made known, though Scripture surely teaches—at least in regard to adults—that their salvation is dependent upon their actually attaining to a knowledge of what Christ has done for men, and upon their being enabled to make a right use and application of the knowledge with which they are furnished. It is very easy and natural, however, to advance a step further, and to conclude that, since Christ died for all men, He must have intended to remove, and have actually removed, not only some, but all, obstacles to their salvation; so that all, at least, to whom He is made known, must have it wholly in their own power to secure their salvation. And this naturally leads to a denial, or at least a dilution, of the doctrine of man's total depravity, and of the necessity of the special supernatural agency of the Spirit, in order to the production of faith and regeneration; or—what is virtually the same thing—to the maintenance of the doctrine of what is called universal sufficient grace,—that is, that all men have sufficient power or ability bestowed upon them to repent and believe, if they will only use it aright.

Calvinistic universalists can, of course, go no further than universal grace in the sense of God's universal love to men, and design to save them, and universal redemption, or Christ's dying for all men. The Arminians follow out these views somewhat more fully and consistently, by taking in also universal vocation, or a universal call to men,—addressed to them either through the word, or through the works of creation and providence,—to trust in Christ, or at least in God's offered mercy, accompanied, in every instance, with grace sufficient to enable them to accept of this call. In like manner, it is nothing more than a consistent and natural following out of the universal grace and universal redemption, to deny the doctrine of election, and thus to overturn the sovereignty of God in the salvation of sinners; and it is not to be wondered at, that some have gone further still, and asserted the doctrine of universal salvation,—the only doctrine that really removes any of the difficulties of this mysterious subject, though, of course, it does so at the expense of overturning the whole authority of revelation. Men have stopped at all these various

stages, and none are to be charged with holding anything which they disclaim; but experience, and the nature of the case, make it plain enough, that the maintenance of universal grace and universal atonement has a tendency to lead men in the direction we have indicated; and this consideration should impress upon us the necessity of taking care lest we should incautiously admit views which may, indeed, seem plausible and innocent, but which may eventually involve us in dangerous error.

I must now terminate the discussion of this whole subject, and proceed to consider the other leading doctrines involved in the controversy between the Calvinists and the Arminians. I have dwelt longer upon this doctrine of the atonement than upon any other. The subject is of fundamental importance, both theoretically and practically; both in its bearing upon a right comprehension of the scheme of Christian truth, and upon the discharge of *the duties* incumbent upon us, viewed either simply as men who have souls to be saved, or as bound to seek the salvation of others. And there is much, in the present condition of the church, and in the existing aspects of our theological literature, to enhance the importance of thoroughly understanding this great doctrine,—having clear and definite conceptions of the principal points involved in it,—and being familiar with the scriptural evidence on which our convictions regarding it rest. The atonement forms the very centre and keystone of the Christian system. It is most intimately connected, on the one side (or *a priori*), with all that is revealed to us concerning the natural state and condition of men, and concerning the nature and character of Him who came in God's name to seek and to save them; and, on the other hand (or *a posteriori*), with the whole provision made for imparting to men individually the forgiveness of their sins,—the acceptance of their persons,—the renovation of their natures,—and, finally, an inheritance among them that are sanctified; and it is well fitted to guard against defective and erroneous views upon the subject of the atonement, that we should view it in its relation to the whole counsel of God, and to the whole scheme of revealed truth. The atonement is the great manifestation of God,—the grand means of accomplishing His purposes. The exposition of the true nature, causes, and consequences of the sufferings and death of the Son of God,—the unfolding of the true character, the objects, and effects, of His once offering up of Himself a sacrifice,—con-

stitutes what is more strictly and peculiarly the gospel of the grace of God, which, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, is to be proclaimed to all nations for the obedience of faith. The only legitimate herald of the cross is the man who has been taught by God's word and Spirit to understand the true nature and application of this great provision,—who, in consequence, has been led to take his stand, for his own salvation, upon the foundation which has been laid in Zion,—and who is able also to go round about Zion, to mark her bulwarks, and to consider her palaces,—to unfold the true nature and operation of the great provision which God has made for saving sinners, by sending His own Son to suffer and die for them. And, with special reference to the peculiar errors of the present time, there are two dangers to be jealously guarded against: first, the danger of attempting to make the cross of Christ more attractive to men,—to make the representations of the scheme of redemption better fitted, as we may fancy, to encourage and persuade men to come to Christ, and to trust in Him, by keeping back, or explaining away, anything which God has revealed to us regarding it,—by failing to bring out, in its due order and right relations, every part of the scheme of revealed truth; and, secondly, the danger of underrating the value and the efficacy of the shedding of Christ's precious blood, of the decease which He once accomplished at Jerusalem, as if it were fitted and intended merely to remove legal obstacles, and to open a door for salvation to all, and not to effect and secure the actual salvation of an innumerable multitude,—as if it did not contain a certain provision,—an effectual security,—that Christ should see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied; that He should appear at length before His Father's throne, with the whole company of the ransomed,—with all whom He washed from their sins in His own blood, and made kings and priests unto God, saying, "Behold, I and the children whom Thou hast given Me!"

*Extract referred to, page 239, from MS. of Sermon delivered by Dr Cunningham, at the opening of the General Assembly of the Free Church, 17th May 1860.*

It is one of the peculiar features of the theology of the present day, that this remarkable and important connection of great principles is overlooked or denied. There are many in the present day, who make a profession of believing in the proper divinity, and even in the eternal Sonship, of the Saviour, who yet deny the doctrine that has been generally held in the Christian church concerning the atonement, and put forth, upon this point, notions substantially the same as those of the Socinians and Arians. They give prominence to the mere incarnation of Christ, without connecting and combining it with His sufferings and death, and with His fulfilment of all righteousness in their room and stead, resolving it into a mere manifestation of the divine character and purposes, intended to make an impression upon our minds. But they have not succeeded in bringing out anything like an adequate cause for so remarkable a peculiarity as the assumption of human nature by the second person of the Godhead; while a confirmation of the great principles we have laid down about the connection of doctrine is to be found in the fact, that the views of these men, even about the divinity of the Son, however plausibly they may sometimes be put forth, turn out, when carefully examined, to be materially different from those which have been usually held in the Christian church, as taught in Scripture; and resolve very much into a kind of Platonic Sabellianism, which explains away any really personal distinction in the Godhead, and thus becomes virtually identified with the ordinary view of Socinians or Unitarians. The fact that influential writers in the present day make a profession of believing in the divinity and incarnation of the Saviour, while denying His vicarious and satisfactory atonement, is a reason why we should make it an object to understand and develop fully the connection between these two great departments of scriptural truth; to perceive and to explain, —so far as Scripture affords any materials for doing so,—how the one leads to and supports the other,—how the incarnation and atonement of our Lord are closely and indissolubly connected together,—and how, in combination, they form the ground and basis of all our hopes.



## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE ARMINIAN CONTROVERSY.

#### *Sec. I.—Arminius and the Arminians.*

WE have had occasion to show that the fundamental principles of Calvinism, with respect to the purposes or decrees, and the providence or proceedings, of God, were believed and maintained by Luther and Zwingle, as well as by Calvin. The opposite view of Zwingle's opinion,—though given both by Mosheim and Milner,—is quite destitute of foundation; and its inaccuracy has been demonstrated by Scott, in his excellent continuation of Milner. Luther and Melancthon had repeatedly asserted God's fore-ordaining whatever comes to pass, and His executing His decrees in providence, in stronger terms than ever Calvin used. There is no evidence that Luther changed his opinion upon this subject. There is evidence that Melancthon's underwent a considerable modification, though to what extent it is not easy to determine, as, in his later works, he seems to have written upon these subjects with something very like studied ambiguity; while, in his letters to Calvin, he continued to make a sort of profession of agreeing with him. The Reformers were substantially of one mind, not only in regard to what are sometimes spoken of in a somewhat vague and general way, as the fundamental principles of evangelical doctrine, but also in regard to what are called the peculiarities of Calvinism; though there were some differences in their mode of stating and explaining them, arising from their different mental temperaments and tendencies, and from the degrees in the extent of their knowledge and the fulness of their comprehension of the scheme of divine truth. The principal opponent of Calvinistic doctrines, while Calvin lived, was Castellio, who had no great weight as a theologian. The Lutheran churches, after the death of Melancthon, generally abandoned Calvin's doctrine in

regard to the divine decrees, and seem to have been somewhat tempted to this course, by their singularly bitter animosity against all who refused to receive their doctrine about the corporal presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The Socinians rejected the whole system of theology which had been generally taught by the Reformers; and Socinus published, in 1578, Castellio's Dialogues on Predestination, Election, Free Will, etc., under the fictitious name of "Felix Turpio Urbevetanus."\* This work seems to have had an influence in leading some of the ministers of the Reformed churches to entertain laxer views upon some doctrinal questions.†

The effects of this first appeared in the Reformed Church of the Netherlands. The Reformation had been introduced into that country, partly by Lutherans from Germany, and partly by Calvinists from France. Calvinistic principles, however, prevailed among them; and the Belgic Confession, which agrees with almost all the confessions of the Reformed churches in teaching Calvinistic doctrines, had, along with the Palatine or Heidelberg Catechism, been, from about the year 1570, invested with public authority in that church. It was in this country that the first important public movement against Calvinism took place in the Reformed churches, and it may be dated from the appointment of Arminius to the chair of theology at Leyden in 1603. An attempt, indeed, had been made to introduce anti-Calvinistic views into the Church of England a few years before this; but it was checked by the interference of the leading ecclesiastical authorities, headed by Whitgift, who was at that time Archbishop of Canterbury. And it was only as the result of the labours of Arminius and his followers, and through the patronage of the Church of England falling into the hands of men who had adopted their views, that, at a later period, Arminianism was introduced into that church. Before his appointment to the chair of theology, Arminius—whose original name was Van Harmen—who had studied theology at Geneva under Beza, and had been for some years pastor of a church in Amsterdam, seems to have adopted, even then, most of the doctrinal views which have since been generally associated with his name, though he was only sus-

\* Spanhemii Elenchus, p. 238. Ed. 1701.

† Basnage, Histoire de la Religion

des Eglises Réformées, P. iii., c. iv., tome ii., p. 262.

*pected* of heterodoxy, or of holding views inconsistent with the doctrine of the Reformed churches and of the Belgic Confession, and had not yet afforded any public or tangible proofs of his deviation from sound doctrine. Although he seems, in general, even after he was settled as Professor of Theology at Leyden, to have proceeded in the promulgation of his opinions with a degree of caution and reserve scarcely consistent with candour and integrity, yet it soon became evident and well known that he had embraced, and was inculcating, opinions inconsistent with those which were generally professed in the Reformed churches. This led to much contention between him and his colleague, Gomarus, who was a learned and zealous defender of Calvinism. The Church of the United Provinces soon became involved in a controversy upon this subject, which got entangled also with some political movements. Arminius was with some difficulty prevailed upon, in 1608, to make a public declaration of his sentiments on the points in regard to which he was suspected of error. He died in 1609. After his death, Episcopius was considered the head of the party; and he ultimately deviated much further from the path of sound doctrine than Arminius had done.

The followers of Arminius, in 1610, presented a remonstrance to the civil authorities of the United Provinces, stating, under five heads or articles, the opinions they had adopted, asking a revision or correction of the symbolical books of the church,—the Belgic Confession, and the Palatine or Heidelberg Catechism,—and demanding full toleration for the profession of their views. This fact procured for them the designation of the Remonstrants, the name by which they are most commonly described in the theological writings of the seventeenth century; while their opponents, from the answer they gave to this paper, are often called *Contraremonstrants*. A conference was held between the parties, at the Hague, in 1611,—usually spoken of as the *Collatio Hagensis*,—at which the leading points in dispute were fully discussed, but without any approach being made towards an agreement. The orthodox party were very anxious to procure a meeting of a national synod, which might take up the subjects controverted, and give a decision upon them. The Arminians laboured to prevent this, and had influence enough with the civil authorities to succeed in this object for several years. At length, in November 1618, a national synod was held at Dort, at which were present

also representatives or delegates from almost all the Reformed churches of Europe, including even the Church of England. This synod sat for about six months,—unanimously condemned the doctrinal views of the Remonstrants,—and adopted a body of canons upon those points at issue, which have been ever since regarded as one of the most valuable and authoritative expositions of Calvinistic theology. By the sentence of the synod, the Remonstrants were deposed from their ecclesiastical offices; and by the civil authorities they were suppressed and exiled. But in a few years—in 1626—they were allowed to return to their country, were tolerated in the performance of public worship, and permitted to establish a theological seminary at Amsterdam. This seminary has been adorned by men of distinguished talents and learning, especially Episcopius, Curcellæus, Limborch, Le Clerc, and Wetstein,—whose labours and writings contributed, to no small extent, to diffuse Arminianism among the Reformed churches.

These are the leading facts connected with the origin and progress of Arminianism, and the reception it met with in the Reformed churches;—facts of which, from their important bearing upon the history of theology, it is desirable to possess a competent knowledge.

As there was nothing new in substance in the Calvinism of Calvin, so there was nothing new in the Arminianism of Arminius;—facts, however, which do not in the least detract from the merits of Calvin as a most powerful promoter of scriptural truth, or from the demerits of Arminius, as an influential disseminator of anti-scriptural error. The doctrines of Arminius can be traced back as far as the time of Clemens Alexandrinus, and seem to have been held by many of the fathers of the third and fourth centuries, having been diffused in the church through the corrupting influence of pagan philosophy. Pelagius and his followers, in the fifth century, were as decidedly opposed to Calvinism as Arminius was, though they deviated much further from sound doctrine than he did. The system of theology which has generally prevailed in the Church of Rome was substantially very much the same as that taught by Arminius, with this difference in favour of the Church of Rome, that the Council of Trent at least left the Romanists at liberty to profess, if they chose, a larger amount of scriptural truth, upon some important points, than the Arminian creed, even in its most evangelical form, admits of,—a truth strik-



ingly confirmed by the fact, that every Arminian would have rejected the five propositions of Jansenius, which formed the ground of the Jansenistic controversy, and would have concurred in the condemnation which the Pope, through the influence of the Jesuits, pronounced upon them.

The more evangelical Arminians, such as the Wesleyan Methodists, are at great pains to show that the views of Arminius himself have been much misunderstood and misrepresented,—that his reputation has been greatly injured by the much wider deviations from sound doctrine which some of his followers introduced, and which have been generally ranked under the head of Arminianism. They allege that Arminius himself agreed with all the leading doctrines of the Reformers, except what they are fond of calling the peculiarities of Calvinism. There is, undoubtedly, a good deal of truth in this statement, as a matter of fact. The opinions of Arminius himself seem to have been almost precisely the same as those held by Mr Wesley, and still generally professed by his followers, except that Arminius does not seem to have ever seen his way to so explicit a denial of the doctrine of perseverance, or to so explicit a maintenance of the possibility of attaining perfection in this life, as Wesley did; and it is true, that much of what is often classed under the general name of Arminianism contains a much larger amount of error, and a much smaller amount of truth, than the writings of Arminius and Wesley exhibit. Arminius himself, as compared with his successors, seems to have held, in the main, scriptural views of the depravity of human nature,—and the necessity, *because of men's depravity*, of a supernatural work of grace to effect their renovation and sanctification,—and this is the chief point in which Arminianism, in its more evangelical form, differs from the more Pelagian representations of Christian doctrine which are often classed under the same designation. The difference is certainly not unimportant, and it ought to be admitted and recognised wherever it exists. But the history of this subject seems to show that, whenever men abandon the principles of Calvinism, there is a powerful tendency leading them downwards into the depths of Pelagianism. Arminius himself does not seem,—so far as his views were ever fully developed,—to have gone further in deviating from scriptural truth than to deny the Calvinistic doctrines of election, particular redemption, efficacious and irresistible grace in conversion, and to doubt, if

not to deny, the perseverance of the saints. But his followers, and particularly Episcopius and Curcellæus, very soon introduced further corruptions of scriptural truth, especially in regard to original sin, the work of the Spirit, and justification; and made near approaches, upon these and kindred topics, to Pelagian or Socinian views. And a large proportion of those theologians who have been willing to call themselves Arminians, have manifested a similar leaning—have exhibited a similar result.

It is quite common, among the writers of the seventeenth century, to distinguish between the original Remonstrants,—such as Arminius and those who adhered to his views, and who differed from the doctrines of the Reformed churches only in the five articles or the five points, as they are commonly called,—and those who deviated much further from scriptural truth. The latter class they were accustomed to call Pelagianizing or Socinianizing Remonstrants; and the followers of Arminius very soon promulgated views that fully warranted these appellations,—views which tended to exclude or explain away almost everything that was peculiar and fundamental in the Christian scheme; and to reduce Christianity to a mere system of natural religion, with only a fuller revelation of the divine will as to the duties and destinies of man. The followers of Arminius very soon began to corrupt or deny the doctrines of original sin,—of the grace of the Spirit in regeneration and conversion,—of justification through Christ's righteousness and merits. They corrupted, as we have seen, the doctrine of the atonement,—that is, the substitution and satisfaction of Christ; and some of them went so far towards Socinianism, as, at least, to talk very lightly of the importance, and very doubtfully of the validity of the evidence, of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ. Something of this sort, though varying considerably in degree, has been exhibited by most writers who have passed under the designation of Arminians, except the Wesleyan Methodists; and it will be a new and unexampled thing in the history of the church, if that important and influential body should continue long at the position they have hitherto occupied in the scale of orthodoxy,—that is, without exhibiting a tendency to imbibe either more truth or more error,—to lean more to the side either of Calvinism or Pelagianism. Pelagian Arminianism is more consistent with itself than Arminianism in its more evangelical forms; and there is a strong tendency in

systems of doctrine to develop their true nature and bearings fully and consistently. Socinianism, indeed, is more consistent than either of them.

The Pelagians of the fifth century did not deny formally the divinity and the atonement of our Saviour, but they omitted them,—left them out in their scheme of theology to all practical intents and purposes,—and virtually represented men as quite able to save themselves. The Socinians gave consistency to the scheme, by formally denying what the Pelagians had practically set aside or left out. Many of those who, in modern times, have passed under the name of Arminians, have followed the Pelagians in this important particular, and while distinguished from the Socinians by holding in words—*or rather, by not denying*—the doctrines of the divinity and atonement of Christ, have practically represented Christianity, in its general bearing and tendency, very much as if these doctrines formed no part of revelation; and all who are Arminians in any sense,—all who reject Calvinism,—may be proved to come short in giving to the person and the work of Christ that place and influence which the Scriptures assign to them. The Papists have always held the doctrines of the divinity and atonement of Christ; and though they have contrived to neutralize and pervert their legitimate influence by a somewhat more roundabout process, they have not, in general, so entirely omitted them, or left them out, as the Pelagians and many Arminians have done. This process of omission or failing to carry out these doctrines in their full bearings and applications upon the way of salvation, and the scheme of revealed truth, has, of course, been exhibited by different writers and sections of the church, passing under the general designation of Arminian, in very different degrees. But, notwithstanding all this diversity, it is not very difficult to point out what may fairly enough be described as the fundamental characteristic principle of Arminianism,—that which Arminianism either *is*, or has a strong and constant tendency to become; and this is,—that it is a scheme for dividing or partitioning the salvation of sinners between God and sinners themselves, instead of ascribing it wholly, as the Bible does, to the sovereign grace of God,—the perfect and all-sufficient work of Christ,—and the efficacious and omnipotent operation of the Spirit. Stapfer, in his “*Theologia Polemica*,” states the *πρωτον ψευδος*, or originating false principle of the Arminians, in this way:

“Quod homini tribuunt vires naturales obediendi Evangelio, ut si non cum Pelagianis saltem cum semi-Pelagianis faciant. Hoc est, si non integras vires statuunt, quales in statu integritatis fuerunt, tamen contendunt, illas licet ægras, ad gratiam oblatam tamen recipiendam sufficientes esse.”\* The encroachment they make upon the grace of God in the salvation of sinners varies, of course, according to the extent to which they carry out their views, especially in regard to men’s natural depravity, and the nature and necessity of the work of the Spirit in regeneration and conversion; but Arminianism, in any form, can be shown to involve the ascription to men themselves,—more directly or more remotely,—of a place and influence in effecting their own salvation, which the Bible denies to them and ascribes to God.

While this can be shown to be involved in, or fairly deducible from, Arminianism in every form, it makes a very material difference in the state of the case, and it should materially affect our judgment of the parties, according as this fundamental characteristic principle is brought out and developed with more or less fullness. This distinction has always been recognised and acted upon by the most able and zealous opponents of Arminianism. It may be proper to give a specimen of this. Ames, or Amesius,—whose writings upon the Popish controversy, in reply to Bellarmine, cannot be spoken of except in the very highest terms of commendation,—has also written several very able works against the Arminians. He was present at the Synod of Dort, though not a member of it,—was much consulted in drawing up its canons,—thoroughly versant in the whole theology of the subject,—and a most zealous and uncompromising advocate of Calvinism. In his work, “De Conscientia,” under the head De Hæresi, he puts this question, *An Remonstrantes sint hæretici?* And the answer he gives is this, “*Remonstrantium sententia, prout à vulgo ipsis faventium recipitur, non est proprie hæresis, sed periculosus error in fide, ad hæresin tendens. Prout vero a quibusdam eorum defenditur, est hæresis Pelagiana: quia gratiæ internæ operationem efficacem necessariam esse negant ad conversionem, et fidem ingenerandam.*”† Ames, then, thought that Arminianism, in its mitigated form, was not to be reckoned a heresy, but only a dangerous error in doctrine, tending to heresy; and that it should be

\* C. xvii., s. xii., tom. iv., p. 528.

† Lib. iv., c. iv., Q. 4.



stigmatized as a heresy, only when it was carried out so far as to deny the necessity of an internal work of supernatural grace to conversion and the production of faith. And the general idea thus indicated and maintained should certainly be applied, if we would form anything like a fair and candid estimate of the different types of doctrine, more or less Pelagian, which have passed under the general name of Arminianism.

*Sec. II.—Synod of Dort.*

The Synod of Dort marks one of the most important eras in the history of Christian theology; and it is important to possess some acquaintance with the theological discussions which gave occasion to it,—with the decisions it pronounced upon them,—and the discussions to which its decisions gave rise. No synod or council was ever held in the church, whose decisions, all things considered, are entitled to more deference and respect. The great doctrines of the word of God had been fully brought out, in the preceding century, by the labours of the Reformers; and, under the guidance of the Spirit which accompanied them, they had been unanswerably defended against the Romanists, and had been cordially embraced by almost all the churches which had thrown off antichristian bondage. In the beginning of the seventeenth century, some men appeared in different churches, who, confident in their own powers, and not much disposed to submit implicitly to the plain teaching of the word of God, were greatly disposed to speculate upon divine things. They subjected the system of doctrines, which had been generally received by the Reformers, to a pretty searching scrutiny, and imagined that they had discovered some important errors, the removal of which tended, as they thought, to make the scheme of scriptural doctrine more rational, and better fitted to command the assent of intelligent men, and to promote the interests of practical religion. They were men abundantly fitted, by their talents and acquirements, to give to these views, and to the grounds on which they rested, every fair advantage. After these alleged improvements upon the theology of the Reformation had been for some time published, and had been subjected to a pretty full discussion, the Synod of Dort assembled to examine them, and give an opinion upon them. It consisted not only of the representatives of the churches of one

country (the United Provinces), but of delegates from almost all the Protestant churches, except the Lutheran. The Protestant Church of France, indeed, was not represented in it; because the delegates appointed by that church to attend the synod (Peter du Moulin and Andrew Rivet, two of the most eminent divines of the age), were prohibited by the King from executing the commission the church had given them. But the next national Synod of the Reformed Church of France adopted the canons of the Synod of Dort, and required assent to them from all their ministers. The delegates from the Church of England had not, indeed, a commission from the church, properly so called, and therefore did not formally represent it; but they were appointed by the civil and the ecclesiastical *heads* of the church,—the King, and the Archbishop of Canterbury; and there is no reason to doubt that they fairly represented, in fact, the doctrinal sentiments that then generally prevailed among their brethren. While the members of the Synod of Dort thus represented, either formally or practically, the great body of the Protestant churches, they were themselves personally the most able and learned divines of the age, many of them having secured for themselves, by their writings, a permanent place in theological literature. This synod, after full and deliberate examination, unanimously determined against the innovations of Arminius and his followers, and gave a decided testimony in favour of the great principles of Calvinism, as accordant with the word of God and the doctrines of the Reformation. These subjects continued to be discussed during the remainder of the century, very much upon the footing of the canons of the Synod of Dort, and with a reference to the decisions they had given. And in order to anything like an intelligent acquaintance with our own Confession of Faith, it is necessary to know something of the state of theological discussion during the period that intervened between the Synod of Dort and the Westminster Assembly, by which the statements and phraseology of our Confession were very materially influenced.

The influential and weighty testimony thus borne in favour of Calvinism has, of course, called down upon the Synod of Dort the hostility of all who have rejected Calvinistic principles. And much has been written, for the purpose of showing that its decision is not entitled to much weight or deference; and that generally for the purpose of exciting a prejudice against it. The chief

pretences employed for this purpose are these: First, It is alleged that the assembling of the synod was connected with some political movements, and that it was held under political influence,—a statement which, though true in some respects, and as affecting some of the parties connected with bringing about the calling of the synod, does not, in the least, affect the integrity and sincerity of the divines who composed it, or the authority of their decisions; for no one alleges that they decided from any other motive but their own conscientious convictions as to the meaning of the word of God. Secondly, The opponents of the synod dwell much upon some differences of opinion, on minor points, that obtained among members of the synod, and upon the exhibitions of the common infirmities of humanity, to which some of the discussions, on disputed topics, occasionally gave rise,—a charge too insignificant to be deserving of notice, when viewed in connection with the purpose to which it is here applied. And, thirdly, They enlarge upon the hardship and suffering to which the Remonstrants were subjected by the civil authorities, in following out the ecclesiastical decisions of the synod, employing these very much as they employ Calvin's connection with the death of Servetus, as if this at all affected the truth of the doctrines taught, or as if there was any fairness in judging, by the notions generally prevalent in modern times, of the character and conduct of men who lived before the principles of toleration were generally understood or acted upon.

It is quite true, that the divines who composed the Synod of Dort generally held that the civil magistrate was entitled to inflict pains and penalties as a punishment for heresy, and that the Arminians of that age—though abundantly subservient to the civil magistrate when he was disposed to favour them, and, indeed, openly teaching a system of gross Erastianism—advocated the propriety of both the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities practising a large measure of toleration and forbearance in regard to differences of opinion upon religious subjects. The error of those who advocated and practised what would now be reckoned persecution, was the general error of the age, and should not, in fairness, be regarded as fitted to give an unfavourable impression of their character and motives, and still less to prejudice us against the soundness of their doctrines upon other and more important topics; while the views of the Arminians about toleration and forbear-

ance—at least as to be practised by the ecclesiastical authorities, in abstaining from exercising ecclesiastical discipline against error—went to the opposite extreme of latitudinarian indifference to truth; and, in so far as they were sound and just as respected the civil authorities, are to be traced chiefly to the circumstances of their own situation, which naturally led them to inculcate such views when the civil authorities were opposed to them, and afford no presumption in favour of the superior excellence of their character, or the *general* soundness of their opinions.

The Romanists, too, have attacked the Synod of Dort, and have not only laboured to excite a prejudice against it, but have endeavoured to draw from it some presumptions in favour of their own principles and practices. Bossuet has devoted to this object a considerable part of the fourteenth book of his History of the Variations of the Protestant Churches. The chief points on which he dwells, so far as the history and proceedings of the synod are concerned,—for I reserve for the present the consideration of its theology,—are these: that it indicated some diversities of opinion among Protestants, on which no deliverance was given; that it was a testimony to the necessity of councils, and of the exercise of ecclesiastical authority in deciding doctrinal controversies; that the answers of the synod to the objections of the Remonstrants against the way in which the synod proceeded, and in which it treated the accused, are equally available for defending the Council of Trent against the common Protestant objections to its proceedings; and that the results of the synod show the uselessness and inefficacy of councils, when conducted and estimated upon Protestant principles. Upon all these points Bossuet has exhibited his usual unfairness, misrepresentation, and sophistry, as has been most conclusively proved by Basnage, in his History of the Religion of the Reformed Churches.\*

It can be easily proved that there was nothing inconsistent with the principles which Protestants maintain against Romanists, on the subject of councils and synods, in anything that was done by the Synod of Dort, or in any inferences fairly deducible from its proceedings; that there was no analogy whatever between the claims and assumptions of the Council of Trent and those of the Synod of Dort, and the relation in which the Protestants in

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\* Basnage, P. iii., c. v.



general stood to the one, and the Remonstrants stood to the other; that, in everything which is fitted to command respect and deference, the Synod of Dort contrasts most favourably with the Council of Trent; and that the whole history of the proceedings of the Church of Rome, in regard to *substantially the same subjects of controversy*, when agitated among themselves during the whole of the seventeenth century, manifests, first, that her claim to the privilege of having a living infallible judge of controversies is practically useless; and, secondly, that the practical use which she has generally made of this claim has been characterized by the most shameless, systematic, and deliberate dishonesty. It is the doctrine of Protestants in general, as laid down in our Confession of Faith, that "it belongeth to synods and councils ministerially to determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience, and that their decrees and determinations, if consonant to the word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission, not only for their agreement with the word, but also for the power whereby they are made as being an ordinance of God, appointed thereunto in His word." This is their duty and function; and all this may be claimed and exercised without the possession or the assumption of infallibility.

The Synod of Dort, as a national Synod of the United Provinces, were the legitimate ecclesiastical superiors of the Remonstrants, entitled to try them, to examine into the innovations in doctrine which they had been introducing into the church, to condemn their errors, and, on the ground of these errors, to subject them to ecclesiastical censure,—a position which the Remonstrants usually either deny or evade, but which is undoubtedly true, and which, being true, affords a conclusive answer to the charges of injustice and tyranny which they usually bring against the Synod's proceedings in regard to them; whereas the Council of Trent had no rightful jurisdiction, in any sense, or to any extent, over Protestants in general. It is interesting, and upon a variety of grounds,—and not merely as affording materials for a retort upon Romanists in answer to their attempts to excite prejudices against the Synod of Dort,—to remember that controversies, upon substantially the same topics, divided the Church of Rome, from the time of the dispute excited by Baius, soon after the dissolution of the Council of Trent, down till the publication of the bull *Unigenitus*, in 1713; that the Popes were repeatedly urged to pronounce a decision upon these

controversies, and repeatedly took them into consideration, professedly with an intention of deciding them; that the whole history of their proceedings in regard to them, for 150 years, affords good ground to believe that they never seriously and honestly considered the question as to what was the truth of God upon the subject, and what their duty to Him required them to do, but were supremely influenced, in all that they did, or proposed, or declined to do in the matter, by a regard to the secular interests of the Papacy; and that, in the prosecution of this last object, all regard to soundness of doctrine, and all respect to the dictates of integrity and veracity, were systematically laid aside.\* I shall not dwell longer upon the historical circumstances connected with the rise of Arminianism and the Synod of Dort, but must proceed to advert to some of the leading points connected with its theology.

*Sec. III.—The Five Points.*

The subjects discussed in the Synod of Dort, and decided upon by that assembly, in opposition to the Arminians, have been usually known in theological literature as the *five points*; and the controversy concerning them has been sometimes called the *quinquarticular* controversy, or the controversy on the five articles. In the remonstrance which the followers of Arminius presented to the civil authorities in 1610, they stated their own doctrines under five heads; and this circumstance determined, to a large extent, the form in which the whole subject was afterwards discussed,—first at the conference at the Hague, in 1611, and afterwards at the Synod of Dort, in 1618. Of these five articles, as they were originally stated, the first was upon predestination, or election; the second, on the death of Christ, and the nature and extent of His redemption; the third, on the cause of faith,—that is, of course, the power or agency by which faith is produced; the fourth, the mode of conversion, or the kind of agency by which it is effected, and the mode of its operation; and the fifth, on perseverance.

On this last topic,—namely, perseverance,—neither Arminius himself nor his followers, for some little time after his death, gave a decided deliverance. They did not seem quite prepared

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\* See Hottinger and Weisman.

to give an explicit and positive denial to the doctrine which had been generally taught in the Reformed churches, of the certain perseverance of all believers. Accordingly, in the conference at the Hague, they professed, as Arminius had done in his public declaration the year before his death, that their mind was not fully made up upon this point, and that they must make a fuller investigation into the import of the scriptural statements regarding it, before they could make any confident assertion, either affirmatively or negatively.\* It is very manifest, however, that their general scheme of theology imperatively required them, in consistency, to deny the doctrine of the certain perseverance of believers, and to maintain that they may totally and finally fall away; and, indeed, it is rather wonderful that they should have doubted upon this point, when they had rejected every other doctrine of Calvinism; for there is certainly no article in the Arminian creed, which has more *appearance* of countenance from scriptural statements than that of the possibility of the apostasy or falling away of believers. Accordingly, they did not continue long in this state of doubt or indecision, and before the Synod of Dort assembled they were fully prepared to assert and maintain an explicit denial of the Calvinistic doctrine of perseverance.

We have already considered the second article, under the head of the Atonement.

The third and fourth articles are evidently, from their nature, very closely connected with each other; and, indeed, are virtually identical. Accordingly, in the subsequent progress of the controversy, they were commonly amalgamated into one; and in the canons of the synod itself, they are treated of together, under one head, though designated the third and fourth articles. As originally stated in the remonstrance, and as discussed in the conference at the Hague, they referred chiefly, the one to the way and manner in which faith was produced, and the other to the way and manner in which conversion was effected. But these two words really describe what is substantially one and the same process and result. Faith and conversion both describe, in substance,—though in different relations and aspects,—the one great process by which men, individually, are united to Christ,—are turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan

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\* Amesii Coronis, p. 285.

unto God,—by which they are put in actual possession of the blessings which Christ purchased. Conversion is descriptive more immediately of the process or change itself; and faith, in the sense in which it is here used, of the means by which it is effected. Every one admits that faith and conversion are certainly and invariably connected with each other; and all, except the lowest Socinians, admit that, while they are acts of man,—that is, while it is man himself who believes and turns to God,—these acts are also, in some sense, produced by the grace or gracious operation of God. Now, the dispute upon this point,—and, indeed, upon all the points involved in the Arminian controversy,—turns upon the question as to the way and manner in which God and man are concerned in the production of man's actions; so that the question as to the cause of faith and the mode of conversion is virtually one and the same, they being two parts, or rather aspects, of one and the same process, which must be regulated and determined by the same principles. In the *Acta et Scripta Synodalia Remonstrantium*,—an important work, in which they explained and defended at length the statement of their opinions which they had given in to the Synod,—they also join together the third and fourth articles; and the general title which they give to the two thus combined is, “*De gratia Dei in conversione hominis*,”—the general subject thus indicated being, of course, the nature, qualities, and regulating principles of this gracious operation, by which God effects, or co-operates in effecting, the conversion of a sinner.

#### *Sec. IV.—Original Sin.*

There is a difference between the title given by the Arminians to their discussion of the third and fourth articles conjointly, and that given by the Synod of Dort to the same two articles, treated also by them as one; and the difference is worth adverting to, as it suggests a topic of some importance in a general survey of the Arminian theology. The title given to these two articles, in the canons of the synod, is this—“On the corruption or depravity of man,—his conversion to God, and the mode or manner of his conversion.”\* Here we have prominence given to the corruption or

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\* *Acta Synodi Nationalis*, p. 263. Ed. 1620.



depravity of man, as a part of this subject, and as in some way the ground or basis of the doctrine which treats of it. If a man possessed some knowledge of what has usually passed under the name of Arminianism in this country,—except as exhibited by the Wesleyans,—but did not know anything of the form in which it appeared and was discussed at the time of the Synod of Dort, he might probably be surprised to find that original sin, or human depravity, did not form the subject of one of the five points. It is a common, and not an inaccurate, impression, that a leading and an essential feature of the Arminian scheme of theology is a denial of man's total depravity, and an assertion of his natural power or ability to do something, more or less, that is spiritually good, and that will contribute to effect his deliverance from the guilt and power of sin, and his eternal welfare. Every consistent Arminian must hold views of this sort, though these views may be more or less completely developed, and more or less fully carried out. The original Arminians held them, though they rather shrunk from developing them, or bringing them into prominence, and rather strove to keep them in the background. Accordingly, they did not introduce, into the original statement and exposition of their peculiar opinions, anything directly and formally bearing upon the subject of original sin or human depravity, and only insinuated their erroneous views upon this important topic in connection with their exposition of the manner in which conversion is effected, and the part which God and man respectively act in that matter.

It holds true universally, that the view we take of the natural condition and character of men, in relation to God and to His law, must materially affect our opinions as to the whole scheme of revealed truth. This is evident from the nature of the case, and it has been abundantly confirmed by experience. The direct and primary object of God's revelation may be said to be,—to make known to us the way in which men may attain to eternal happiness. But the way in which this result is to be attained, must depend upon, and be regulated by, the actual state and condition of men,—the nature and strength of the obstacles, if there be any, which stand in the way of accomplishing this object,—and the power or ability of men to do anything towards removing these obstacles, and thereby effecting the results. The way of salvation, accordingly, revealed in Scripture, assumes, and is based

upon, men's actual state and capacities. The one is, throughout, adapted or adjusted to the other in the actual divine arrangements, and, of course, in the revelation given to us concerning the whole state of the case. If men can attain to eternal happiness only in a certain way, and through certain arrangements, their actual state and character must have rendered *these* arrangements necessary; and these two things being thus necessarily connected, the one must at once determine and indicate the other. Accordingly, we find, in the history of the church, that the views which men have entertained of the natural state and condition of the human race, have always accorded with the opinions they have formed with regard to the scheme of divine truth in general.

Socinians, believing that man labours under no depraved tendency, but is now in the same condition, and possessed of the same powers, in a moral point of view, as when he was first created, naturally and consistently discard from their scheme of theology a divine Saviour, and a vicarious atonement. Calvinists, believing that man is by nature wholly guilty and entirely depraved, recognise the necessity of a full satisfaction, a perfect righteousness, and an almighty and irresistible agency. Arminians occupy a sort of intermediate place between them,—admitting the divinity and atonement of Christ, and the necessity of the agency of the Spirit,—but not assigning to the work either of the Son or of the Spirit, in the salvation of sinners, that supreme place,—that efficacious and determining influence,—which Calvinists ascribe to them. And, in accordance with these views, they have been in the habit of corrupting the doctrine of original sin, or of maintaining defective and erroneous opinions in regard to the guilt and sinfulness of the estate into which man fell. They have usually denied the imputation of Adam's first sin to his posterity; and, while admitting that man's moral powers and capacities have been injured or deteriorated by the fall, they have commonly denied that *entire* depravity, that inability—without a previous change effected upon them by God's almighty grace—to will or do anything spiritually good, which Calvinists have generally asserted; or, if they have admitted the entire depravity of men by nature,—as Arminius and Wesley did, or, at least, intended to do,—the effect of this admission has been only to introduce confusion and inconsistency into the other departments of their creed. While erroneous and defective views of the natural guilt and depravity

of man have generally had much influence in leading men to adopt the whole Arminian system of theology, their views upon this subject have not always come out earliest or most prominently, because they can talk largely and fully upon men's depravity, without *palpably* contradicting themselves; while by other parts of their system,—such as their doctrine about the work of the Spirit, and the way and manner in which conversion is effected,—they may be practically undermining all scriptural conceptions upon the subject.

This was very much what was exhibited in the development of the views of Arminius and his followers. The statements of Arminius himself, in regard to the natural depravity of man, so far as we have them upon record, are full and satisfactory. And the third and fourth articles, as to the grace of God in conversion, even as taught by his followers at the time of the Synod of Dort, contain a large amount of scriptural truth. It is worthy of notice, however, that on the occasion when Arminius, in the year before his death, made a public declaration of his statements, in the presence of the civil authorities of Holland, his colleague, Gomarus, charged him with holding some erroneous opinions upon the subject of original sin,—a fact from which, viewed in connection with the subsequent history of this matter, and the course usually taken by Arminians upon this subject, we are warranted in suspecting that he had given some indications, though probably not very distinct, of softening down the doctrines generally professed by the Reformers upon this point.\* In the third article, the Remonstrants professed to ascribe the production of faith, and the existence of everything spiritually good in man, to the operation of divine grace, and to assert the necessity of the entire renovation of his nature by the Holy Spirit. And, in the fourth article, they extended this principle of the necessity of divine grace, or of the agency of the Spirit, to the whole work of sanctification,—to the whole of the process by which men, after being enabled to believe, are cleansed from all sin, and made meet for heaven. These statements, of course, did not form any subject of dispute between them and their opponents. The Calvinists held all this, and had always done so. They only doubted whether the Arminians really held these doctrines honestly, in the natural meaning of the words,

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\* Scott on Synod of Dort; Historical portion.

or, at least, whether they could intelligently hold them consistently in union with other doctrines which they maintained. Ames, after quoting the third article, as stated by the Remonstrants in the conference at the Hague,—and they retained it in the same terms at the Synod of Dort,—says: “De assertionis hujus veritate, nulla in Collatione movebatur controversia, neque nunc in quæstionem vocatur: imo ad magnam harum litium partem sedandam, hæc una sufficeret thesis, modo sinceram eam Remonstrantium confessionem continere constaret, et ex labiis dolosis non prodire. Sed magna subest suspicio, eos non tam ex animo, quam ex arte dixisse multa, quæ continentur in istoc effato. Diruunt enim alibi, quæ hic ædificant: ut ex paucis his inter sese collatis, mihi saltem videtur manifestum.”\* He then proceeds to quote statements made on other occasions by the Arminians, who took part in this conference, that are inconsistent with this article, and that plainly enough ascribe to men some power to do what is spiritually good of themselves, and in the exercise of their own natural capacities.

I have quoted this passage, because it contains an accurate description of the course commonly pursued in all ages by Arminians in discussing this subject, and most fully by the Arminians of the Church of England. They are obliged, by the necessity of keeping up an appearance of consistency with their Articles and Homilies, to make large general admissions in regard to the depravity of men, and their inability of themselves to do anything spiritually good; and as these admissions are inconsistent with the general spirit and the fundamental principles of their scheme of theology, they are under the necessity of contradicting themselves, and of withdrawing with the one hand what they had given with the other.

The confusion and inconsistency often displayed by Episcopalian Arminians on these topics, when treating of original sin, regeneration, and the work of the Spirit, is very deplorable, and sometimes appears in a form that is really ludicrous. Bishop Tomline quoted, with disapprobation, as Calvinism, a statement on the subject, which was taken from the Homilies.† Dr Sumner, Archbishop of Canterbury, in his “Apostolical Preaching Considered,”—which, though a poor book, is yet decidedly superior, both in

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\* Amesii Coronis, Art. iii., p. 170. | Refutation of Calvinism, vol. i., pp.  
 † Vide Scott's Remarks on Tomline's | 105-6.



point of ability and orthodoxy, to Tomline's "Refutation of Calvinism,"—warned, apparently, by the exposure of Tomline's blunders, adopts a different mode of dealing with the strong statements of the Homilies on this subject. He quotes two passages from the Homilies; one from the Homily on the Nativity, and the other from that on Whitsunday, Part I.,—the second of these being the one denounced by Tomline,—and charges them with exaggeration as containing "strong and unqualified language, which is neither copied from Scripture nor sanctioned by experience."\*

The *first* part of the fourth article,—in which they apply the principle of the necessity of divine grace to the whole process of sanctification,—is to be regarded in the same light as the third,—namely, as sound in itself, but contradicted on other occasions by themselves, because inconsistent with the general spirit of their system. In the end of the fourth article, however, they have introduced a statement, which forms the subject of one of the leading departments of the controversy. It is in these words: "Quoad vero modum operationis istius gratiæ, illa non est irresistibilis." Calvinists, in general, do not admit that this is an accurate statement of the question, and do not undertake, absolutely, and without some explanation of the principal term, to defend the position here by implication ascribed to them,—namely, that the grace of God, in conversion, is irresistible. Still, the statement points, and was intended to point, to an important subject of controversy between the Calvinists and the Arminians,—one in which a real and important difference of opinion exists. It is usually discussed by Calvinists under the heads of effectual calling and efficacious grace, and it will be necessary to devote to it some portion of our attention.

The way and manner in which faith is produced, and in which conversion is effected, depend somewhat upon the power or capacity which man has, by nature, of doing anything spiritually good and acceptable to God; and that, again, depends upon the entireness or totality of the corruption or depravity that attaches to man through the fall. And hence it was, that though the Arminians had not, in what they laid down upon the mode or manner of conversion, said anything directly about men's natural depravity, the Synod of Dort, in their canons on the third and fourth articles,

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\* C. iii., pp. 129, 130. Ed. 1850.

included and expounded the doctrine of man's entire depravity by nature, and his inability to do anything spiritually good, and made this the basis,—as the Scripture does,—of their whole doctrine with respect to the cause of faith,—the necessity and nature of regeneration and conversion,—the work of the Spirit,—and the principles by which His operations are regulated, in applying to men individually the benefits purchased for them by Christ.

I have thought it proper to explain why it was that the subject of man's natural depravity did not occupy so prominent a place as might have been expected in the formal discussion of the Arminian controversy, when it first arose, about the time of the Synod of Dort,—at least as it was conducted on the Arminian side,—although it really lies at the root of the whole difference, as was made more palpably manifest in the progress of the discussion, when the followers of Arminius developed their views upon this subject more fully, and deviated further and further from the doctrine of the Bible and the Reformation on the subject of the natural state and character of men. I do not mean, however, in proceeding with the examination of the Arminian controversy, to dwell upon this topic; because I have already considered pretty fully the subjects of original sin and free-will in connection with the Pelagian controversy. The doctrine of most Arminians upon these subjects is, in substance, that of the Church of Rome, as defined by the Council of Trent,—that is, it holds true of them both that they qualify or limit the extent or completeness of the depravity which attaches to man by nature, in consequence of the fall, so as to leave room for free-will, *in the sense* of a natural power or ability in men to do something that is spiritually good as well as to do what is spiritually evil; and thus to represent man as able, in the exercise of his own natural powers, to contribute, in some measure, to the production of faith, and at least to prepare himself for turning to God and doing His will. In discussing this subject, in opposition to the doctrine of the Pelagians and the Church of Rome,—which is very much the same as that of the generality of Arminians,—I took occasion to explain pretty fully the great doctrine of the Reformation and of our own Confession of Faith, about the connection between men's entire moral corruption and the entire bondage or servitude of their will to sin because of depravity, or their inability to will or to do anything spiritually good,—*the only species* of bondage or necessity, or of anything opposed

in any sense to freedom of will, which, upon scriptural grounds, as Calvinists, or because of anything contained in our Confession of Faith, we are called upon to maintain. But, while right views of the entire depravity of man's moral nature, and of the thorough bondage or servitude of his will to sin, because of this depravity,—or, as our Confession says, “his total loss, by the fall into a state of sin, of all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation,”—should, when applied and carried out, settle the questions which have been raised as to the production of faith and the cause of conversion, and the nature and character of the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit in effecting these results,—the topics usually discussed under the head of effectual calling,—the sufficiency, efficacy, and, in some sense, irresistibility of grace,—yet the full exposition of these latter topics was not brought out until the Arminian and Jansenistic controversies arose in the Protestant and Romish Churches respectively in the seventeenth century. And, while the chief topics involved in these two great controversies were substantially the same, they present, in regard to the particular topic now before us, this remarkable and interesting contrast, that, while in the Protestant Church the Arminians corrupted the doctrine of the Reformers with regard to effectual calling, and the efficacy of divine grace, or of the work of the Spirit, in regeneration, without, at first at least, formally denying man's depravity and moral inability; on the other hand, the Jansenists in the Church of Rome strenuously maintained what were, in substance, scriptural and Calvinistic views in regard to the efficacy of grace, without formally denying the corrupt doctrine of the Council of Trent in regard to original sin and free-will.

We shall advert to this subject of effectual calling, and the nature and efficacy of divine grace, or of the work of the Spirit, in producing faith and regeneration, as suggested by the third and fourth articles of the Synod of Dort, before we proceed to consider the important subject of the first article,—the great doctrine of Predestination or Election; and we shall follow this order, partly for reasons of convenience suggested by the topics we have already been led to consider, and partly for reasons founded on the nature of the case, and the intrinsic connection of the subjects to which we may afterwards have occasion to refer.\*

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\* *Vide* Owen, Spanheim, Stapfer, Molinæi “Anatome.”

*Sec. V.—Universal and Effectual Calling.*

We have had occasion, in discussing the subject of the atonement, to explain the distinction which has been generally made by divines between the impetration and the application of the blessings of redemption, and to advert especially to the use, or rather the abuse, of it by the Arminians, in maintaining that impetration and application are not only distinct in themselves, but separable, and often, in fact, separated,—that is, that Christ impetrated the spiritual blessings of reconciliation and forgiveness for many to whom they are never applied, who never actually receive or partake of them,—a position, as we have seen, which can be made to assume something like plausibility only by maintaining that reconciliation and forgiveness are not reconciliation and forgiveness, but merely something preparatory to, or tending towards, them. Calvinists admit that the impetration and the application of spiritual blessings are distinct things,—impetration being the immediate effect of Christ's work, and being completed when Christ's sacrifice of Himself in men's room was presented and accepted; and application, or the actual bestowal of these blessings upon men individually, being the result of the operation of the Holy Spirit, when by Him men individually are united to Christ through faith, so as actually to receive the blessings which He purchased for them, and are created again in Christ Jesus by His almighty power. Arminians hold that spiritual blessings—at least reconciliation and pardon—were impetrated or purchased for all men, but that they are applied only to some; while Calvinists hold that they were purchased only for some, but that they are applied to all for whom they were purchased. This disjunction or separation of impetration and application,—an essential feature of the Arminian scheme,—compels them, as I formerly illustrated, first, to explain away the true scriptural import of the blessings which they admit to have been purchased,—to reduce reconciliation to reconciliability, pardon to a possibility of pardon, salvation to salvability; and, secondly, to deny altogether that other blessings, equally indispensable to the salvation of men individually,—such as faith and regeneration,—are to be regarded as the fruits of Christ's purchase. These are corruptions of Christian doctrine not peculiar to the Arminians. They *must* be held in substance by all who believe in an unlimited atonement, if they



will follow out their principles consistently. This has been already explained, and we have to do now only with the application of the blessings of redemption; and with this, too, not as procured and secured by the work of Christ, but only as actually effected in men individually by the work of the Holy Spirit, the necessity of whose agency in this matter is admitted by all but Socinians.

This whole subject, taken in its widest sense, may be regarded as resolving into this question,—What provision has God made for imparting to men individually the blessings which Christ purchased for them, and which are indispensable to their deliverance and salvation? and what are the principles which regulate or determine the actual results of this provision in the pardon, conversion, and salvation of some men, and in the continued guilt and impenitence, and the everlasting misery, of others? It will be recollected, that, having reserved the subject of predestination for future consideration, we have not, in examining this question, anything to do, in the first instance, with the decree, purpose, or design of the divine mind in regard to individuals, but only with the provision made by God for executing His decrees or accomplishing His purposes, as it is presented to our contemplation, and with the results which flow from it. It is with the providence, not the decrees, of God, that we have at present to do; and in this statement the word providence is not to be understood in the more limited sense in which it is sometimes employed, as contradistinguished from grace, but as including it. God executes *all* His decrees or purposes, with respect to the human race, in His works of creation and providence,—that is, in creating and thereafter regulating all things; and though it is common to employ the word providence as descriptive only of that department of the divine procedure, in regulating and governing the world, which has respect to material, external, and temporal things, and to apply the word grace to that department of the divine actings which bear immediately upon the conversion, sanctification, and salvation of sinners, and is ascribed in Scripture to the special agency of the Holy Spirit; and though it is right that these two departments of the divine procedure should be distinguished from each other, yet this mode of distinguishing them is neither sanctioned by Scripture usage, nor very accurate in itself. All that God does in regard to the world and the human race, after creating them, is comprehended in His providence, or in the

supreme dominion which He *is* ever exercising over all His creatures and over all their actions; and this providence, therefore, comprehends all that He does in the dispensation of the Spirit,—in communicating that grace, or those gracious supernatural influences, on which the actions and the destinies of men so essentially depend.

The general provision which God has made for imparting to men individually the blessings which Christ purchased by the shedding of His precious blood, may be said to consist in these three things: first, the making known to men what Christ has done and suffered for their salvation; secondly, the offering to men the blessings which Christ purchased, and the inviting men to accept of them; and, thirdly, the communication of the Holy Spirit to dispose or enable them to accept the offer,—to comply with the invitation,—that is, to repent and believe, and to effect, or contribute to effect, in them the renovation or sanctification of their natures. Calvinists and Arminians agree in admitting that these things, when stated in this somewhat vague and indefinite form, which has been adopted intentionally for the present, constitute the provision which God has made for imparting to men individually the benefits of redemption; but they differ materially in their views upon some important points connected with the necessity and the nature of the different branches of this provision, and the principles that regulate their application and results. The Arminians, believing in universal grace, in the sense of God's love to all men,—that is, *omnibus et singulis*, or His design and purpose to save all men conditionally,—and in universal redemption, or Christ's dying for all men,—consistently follow out these views by asserting a universal *proclamation* to men of God's purpose of mercy,—a universal vocation, or offer and invitation, to men to receive pardon and salvation,—accompanied by a universal sufficient grace,—gracious assistance actually and universally bestowed, sufficient to enable all men, if they choose, to attain to the full possession of spiritual blessings, and ultimately to salvation. Calvinists, while they admit that pardon and salvation are offered indiscriminately to all to whom the Gospel is preached, and that all who can be reached should be invited and urged to come to Christ and embrace Him, deny that this flows from, or indicates, any design or purpose on God's part to save all men; and without pretending to understand or unfold all the objects or ends of this

arrangement, or to assert that it has no other object or end whatever, regard it as *mainly* designed to effect the result of calling out and saving God's chosen people; and they deny that grace, or gracious divine assistance, sufficient to produce faith and regeneration, is given to all men. They distinguish between the outward vocation or calling and the internal or effectual, and regard the real regulating principle that determines the acceptance or non-acceptance of the call or invitation of the gospel by men individually, to be the communication or the non-communication of the efficacious agency of the Holy Spirit; Arminians, of course, resolving this—for there is no other alternative—into men's own free-will, their own improvement or non-improvement of the sufficient grace given to them all.

In investigating these subjects, the first thing to be attended to manifestly is the proclaiming or making known to men God's purpose of mercy or way of salvation; and here, at the very outset, Arminians are involved in difficulties which touch the foundations of their whole scheme of theology, and from which they have never been able to extricate themselves. They can scarcely deny that it is at least the ordinary general rule of God's procedure, in imparting to men the blessings of redemption, that their possession of them is made dependent upon their becoming acquainted with what Christ did for sinners, and making a right use and application of this knowledge. If this be so, then it would seem that we might naturally expect that—if the Arminian doctrines of universal grace and universal redemption are well founded—God would have made provision for securing that a knowledge of His love and purpose of mercy, and of the atonement of Christ,—the great means for carrying it into practical effect,—should be communicated to all men, or at least brought within their reach. And Calvinists have always regarded it as a strong argument against the Arminian doctrines of universal grace and universal redemption, and in favour of their own views of the sovereign purposes of God, that, in point of fact, so large a portion of the human race have been always left in entire ignorance of God's mercy, and of the way of salvation revealed in the gospel; nay, in such circumstances as, to all appearance, throw insuperable obstacles in the way of their attaining to that knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, which is eternal life.

It is a fact, that a large portion of every successive generation

that has peopled the earth's surface, have been left in this condition,—a fact which we should contemplate with profound reverence and holy awe, but which we should neither turn from, nor attempt to explain away, and which, like everything else in creation and providence, ought to be applied for increasing our knowledge of God, of His character and ways. The diversities in the condition of different nations, with respect to religious privileges or the means of grace, as well as the determination of the condition and opportunities in this respect of each individual, as regulated ordinarily in a great measure by the time and place of his birth, are to be ascribed to the sovereign good pleasure of God. He has determined all this according to the counsel of His own will. We can give no other full or complete explanation of these things. Partial explanations may sometimes be given in regard to particular countries; but these do not reach the root of the matter in any case, and are palpably inadequate as applied to the condition of the world at large. We can assign no reason, for instance, why it is that Great Britain, which, at the time of our Saviour's appearance upon earth, was in a state of thorough ignorance and barbarism, should now possess so largely herself, and be disseminating so widely to others, the most important spiritual privileges; or why we, individually, have been born in this highly favoured land, instead of coming into existence amid the deserts of Africa, which does not resolve itself, either immediately or ultimately, into the good pleasure of God. Arminians have laboured to reconcile all this, as a matter of fact, with their defective and erroneous views of the divine sovereignty, and with their unscriptural doctrines of universal grace and universal redemption; but they have not usually been satisfied themselves with their own attempts at explanation, and have commonly at last admitted, that there were mysteries in this matter which could not be explained, and which must just be resolved into the sovereignty of God and the unsearchableness of His counsels.

We have, however, to do with this topic, *at present*, only as it is connected with the alleged universal proclamation of God's purpose of mercy to sinners, or of a way of salvation. Arminians are bound to maintain, in order to expound with something like consistency the great leading principles of their scheme of theology, that God has made such a revelation to all men, as that, by the right use of it, or if they do not fail in the due improvement



of what they have, they may, and will, attain to salvation. This has led many of them not only to maintain that men may be, and that many have been, saved by Christ, or upon the ground of His atonement, who never had any knowledge of what He had done for men, but also to devise a sort of preaching of the gospel, or proclamation of the way of salvation, without a revelation, and by means merely of the works of nature and providence,—views which are plainly inconsistent with the teaching of Scripture. While they are compelled to admit an exercise of the divine sovereignty—that is, of God's acting in a way, the reasons of which we do not know, and cannot trace or explain—in the different degrees of knowledge and of privilege which He communicates to different nations, they usually maintain, that it is indispensable, in order to the vindication of the divine character, that *all men*—however inferior in degree the privileges of some may be to those of others—should have, at least, such means of knowing God, as that, by the right use and improvement of them, they can attain to salvation. We, of course, do not deny that there are mysteries in this subject which we cannot explain, and which we can only contemplate with profound reverence and awe; or that men's everlasting condition will be, in some measure, regulated by the privileges and opportunities they have enjoyed; or that all who perish shall perish justly and righteously, having incurred real guilt by the ignorance of God which they actually manifested; but we cannot, because of the difficulties attaching to this mysterious subject, renounce the plain scriptural principle, that it is “eternal life to know God, and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent;” or dispute the plain matter of fact, that, as the *certain result* of arrangements which God has made, many of our fellow-men are placed in circumstances in which they cannot attain to that knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ on which eternal life depends.

Some Arminians have been so much impressed with these considerations, as to indicate a willingness to make a sort of compromise upon this subject, by agreeing to exclude from happiness those to whom Christ has not been made known, provided they are not consigned to misery; that is, they have been disposed to cherish the notion of an intermediate eternal state, in addition to the two which the Bible reveals to us, as the ultimate and everlasting abodes of all the individuals of the human race,—heaven

being provided for those who have believed the gospel,—hell for those who have rejected it when it was proclaimed to them,—and an intermediate state, without suffering, for those who never heard it.\* This idea is thus expressed by Limborch. After declaring it to be very probable that men who make a good use of the light they have will be graciously saved through Christ, though they have never heard of Him, he adds: “*Vel, si id nolumus, antequam divina bonitas eos ad inferni cruciatus damnare credatur, sicut triplex hominum in hoc ævo est status, credentium, incredulorum, et ignorantium; ita etiam triplex post hanc vitam hominum status, concedendus videtur: vitæ æternæ, qui est credentium: cruciatuum infernalium, qui est incredulorum; et præter hosce, status ignorantium.*”† This awful subject should certainly preclude the indulgence of those feelings which mere controversial discussion is apt to produce,—anything like an approach to an eager contending for victory; but it is right, from a regard to the interests of truth, to observe, that the only evidence he produces for these notions,—and which he seems to think must prove one or other of them,—is the general scriptural principle, that men shall be dealt with according to the opportunities they have enjoyed. This principle is manifestly insufficient to support such notions; so that the whole matter resolves into this,—that Arminians will rather invent theories about subjects of which they can know nothing, than believe what God has plainly told us concerning Himself, when this does not coincide with the previous conceptions they may have formed of His character and His ways.‡

They are usually glad, however, to escape from this branch of the subject, about the universal proclamation of God’s grace, and of a way of salvation to all men,—feeling, apparently, that the plain facts of the case, viewed in connection with the plainly revealed, though awful and mysterious, doctrines of Scripture, cannot easily be reconciled with their system; and they hasten on to try their notions of universal vocation, and sufficient grace,

\* This was denied by Arminius himself, *Orat. de Objecto Theologiæ*, quoted in *Edwards’ Veritas Redux*, p. 432.

† Limborch, *Theol.*, Lib. iv., c. xi., p. 363. Ed. 1686.

‡ Others have supposed that God may extend their probation beyond this life. *Scot’s Christian Life*, quoted in *Edwards’ Veritas Redux*, p. 444.

in the case of all to whom the gospel is made known. In making this transition, they usually allege that they have no desire to inquire curiously into the condition and destiny of those to whom the gospel is not made known,—that we have to do chiefly with the case of those who have an opportunity of knowing God's revelation, and with the principles which regulate their fate,—and that it is quite sufficient to overthrow the Calvinistic system of theology, if it can be proved that sufficient grace is communicated to all of them. We have no satisfaction, any more than they, in dwelling upon the mysterious subject of the destiny of the innumerable multitudes of our fellow-men who have died without having had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the only name given under heaven or among men whereby we can be saved;—we indulge in no speculations upon their fate, beyond what Scripture sanctions;—we leave them in the hands of the Judge of all the earth, who, we are assured, will do right. But there is nothing in all this to warrant or excuse us in refusing to believe what Scripture teaches, or to contemplate in the light of Scripture what the condition of the world sets before us; and it is the more necessary and important that we should realize and apply—so far as we have clear and certain materials—the doctrines and the facts bearing upon this subject, awful and incomprehensible as it undoubtedly is, when we find that these doctrines and facts afford proofs of the erroneousness of some of the views of the divine character and government, and of the way of salvation, which the Arminians have been accustomed to propound. As to their allegation, that it is sufficient to refute Calvinism, if they can establish their principle as applicable to all who hear the gospel, it is enough, *at present*, to remind them, that they have not only to attack Calvinism, but to defend their own system; and that the survey of the condition of the world at large, taken in connection with doctrines plainly taught in Scripture,—and this is the first subject which naturally presents itself for examination in this department of the controversy,—not only answers many of their common objections against Calvinism, but suggests objections to the Arminian scheme of theology, which its advocates are unable satisfactorily to dispose of.

Let us briefly advert to the application they make of their principles to all who live within the sound of the gospel. The view they give of the state and condition of those persons is this,

—that they are all equally called and invited to the reception and enjoyment of the blessings which Christ purchased for all men,—that, as God desires and purposes the salvation of all of them, He gives to them all such grace or gracious assistance as is sufficient to enable them all to repent and believe, if they choose, and as will certainly effect their conversion and salvation, unless they refuse to use and improve it aright. Calvinists admit that all to whom the gospel is preached, are called or invited to come to Christ and to embrace Him; but they deny that this flows from, or indicates on God's part, a design or purpose to save them all; and they deny that grace or gracious assistance, sufficient to enable them to repent and believe, is communicated to them all. They distinguish between the outward call addressed to all by the word, and the inward or effectual call addressed to some by the Spirit, whereby they are really enabled to accept of the offer,—to comply with the invitation,—and thus to believe in Christ and to turn to God. The great facts presented by the preaching of the gospel, viewed in connection with its results, are these,—that some believe it and submit to its influence, and are, in consequence, renewed in the spirit of their minds, and enabled thereafter to walk in the way of God's commandments; while others, with the same outward opportunities, with the same truths addressed to them, and the same arguments and motives urged upon them, continue to reject the truth, and remain wholly unaffected by it, in the great features of their character, and in the leading motives by which they are animated. And the question in dispute virtually resolves into this,—What is the true cause or explanation of this difference in the result in the case of different individuals? They all enjoy the same outward privileges; they all possess substantially the same natural capacities; they are all warranted and bound to believe the truth proclaimed to them; they are all invited to come to Christ, and to receive salvation through Him. The call or invitation is seriously or honestly addressed to them all. Upon this point the statement of the Synod of Dort is this,—and it is quoted with cordial approbation by Turretine,\* and concurred in generally by Calvinists,—“*Quotquot per evangelium vocantur, serio vocantur. Serio enim et verissime ostendit Deus Verbo suo, quid sibi gratum sit, nimirum ut vocati ad se veniant. Serio etiam*

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\* Turretin. Loc. xv., Qu. ii., sec. xiv.



omnibus ad se venientibus et credentibus requiem animarum et vitam æternam promittit." Calvinists likewise believe, that all who reject the gospel, and refuse to submit to it and to turn to God, are themselves fully responsible for doing so,—are guilty of sin, and justly expose themselves to punishment on this account; or, as the Synod of Dort says, "Hujus culpa non est in Evangelio,—nec in Christo per Evangelium oblato,—nec in Deo per Evangelium vocante, et dona etiam varia iis conferente,—sed in ipsis vocatis." There is no dispute upon these points, though Arminians attempt to show that Calvinists cannot hold these doctrines consistently with some of their other principles.

Were this *all* that is revealed to us as to the cause of the difference of the results, the Arminian doctrine might be true, that all had received sufficient grace to enable them to accept of the call, and that the *only* principle that could be brought to bear upon the explanation of the difference of the results, was, that some used and improved aright the grace they had received, and others did not. This is true, but it is not the whole truth upon the subject. The Scriptures not only inform us that all who refuse to repent and believe, are responsible for this, and incur guilt by it; they likewise tell us of the way and manner in which faith and conversion are produced in those who believe and turn to God; and what they tell us upon this point, makes it manifest that the result, in *their* case, is not to be ascribed to anything that is merely common to them with others, either in their natural capacities or in the grace of God,—that is, in gracious assistance communicated by Him,—but to a special distinguishing work or influence of His Spirit bestowed upon them, and *not* bestowed on the rest. This is what Calvinists commonly call special, distinguishing, efficacious grace, as opposed to the Arminian universal sufficient grace; they regard it as a peculiar operation of God's Spirit bestowed upon some, and not upon others,—the true and real cause of faith and regeneration wherever they exist, and certainly and effectually securing the production of faith and regeneration wherever it is bestowed.

Now, the questions to be discussed upon this point are these: First, Do the Scriptures set before us such a special, distinguishing operation of the Spirit, bestowed upon some and not bestowed upon others? and, secondly, Do they represent this special grace or dis-

tinguishing gracious operation of the Spirit, as the true cause or source of faith and regeneration wherever they exist,—the real reason or explanation of the different results exhibited,—in that some men repent and believe, while others, with the same outward call or vocation, and with the same external privileges, continue in impenitence and unbelief? I do not mean to enter into an examination of the scriptural evidence, but will only make one or two observations upon the points involved in the discussion, as it has been usually conducted.

It is important to fix in our minds a clear conception of the *alternatives* in the explanation of this matter, according as the Calvinistic or the Arminian doctrine upon the subject is adopted. The thing to be accounted for is,—the positive production of faith and regeneration in some men; while others continue, under the same outward call and privileges, in their natural state of impenitence and unbelief. Now, this is just virtually the question, Who maketh those who have passed from death to life, and are now advancing towards heaven, to differ from those who are still walking in the broad way? Is it God? or is it themselves? The Calvinists hold that it is God who makes this difference; the Arminians—however they may try to conceal this, by general statements about the grace of God and the assistance of the Spirit—virtually and practically ascribe the difference to believers themselves. God has given sufficient grace—everything necessary for effecting the result—to others as well as to them. There is no difference in the call addressed to them, or in the grace vouchsafed to them. This is equal and alike. There is a difference in the result; and, from the sufficiency and consequent substantial equality of the universal grace vouchsafed, this difference, in the result, must necessarily be ascribed, as to its real adequate cause, to something in themselves,—not to God's grace, not to what He graciously bestowed upon them, but to what they themselves were able to do, and have done, in improving aright what God communicated to them. If sufficient grace is communicated to all who are outwardly called, then no more than what is sufficient is communicated to those who actually repent and believe,—for, to assert this, is virtually to deny or retract the position, that what was communicated to those who continue impenitent and unbelieving, *was sufficient or adequate*, and thus to contradict their fundamental doctrine upon this whole sub-

ject.\* And when the true state of the question, and the real alternatives involved, are thus brought out, there is no difficulty in seeing and proving that the Arminian doctrine is inconsistent with the plain teaching of Scripture,—as to the great principles which regulate or determine men's spiritual character and eternal destiny,—the true source and origin of all that is spiritually good in them,—the real nature of faith and regeneration, as implying changes which men are utterly unable to produce, or even to cooperate, in the first instance, in originating; and as being not only the work of God in men,—the gift of God to men,—but also, and more particularly, as being, in every instance, the result of a special operation of the Holy Ghost,—an operation represented as altogether peculiar and distinguishing,—bestowed upon some and not upon others, according to the counsel of God's own will, and *certainly* or infallibly effecting, wherever it is bestowed, all those things that accompany salvation.

*Sec. VI.—Efficacious and Irresistible Grace.*

We have stated generally the nature and import of the application of the blessings which Christ purchased for men,—or the way and manner in which God imparts these blessings to men individually,—explaining the Arminian doctrines of universal vocation and sufficient grace, as applicable, first, to mankind in general, and, secondly, to all to whom the gospel is made known; and contrasting them with the doctrines generally held by Calvinists, in regard to effectual calling and efficacious grace. We have seen that, as we cannot assign any other adequate cause or reason, except the good pleasure of God, why so many of our fellow-men have always been, and still are, left in a state in which they cannot attain to a knowledge of the way of salvation, while others enjoy the glorious light of the gospel; so we are shut up also to ascribe to a special distinguishing gracious operation of God's Spirit,—bestowed upon some and not upon others,—the fact, that of those who do enjoy the same outward vocation and the same external privileges, some reject the call, refuse to believe and to turn to God, while others believe and are converted. The

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\* Hottingeri Fata Doctrinæ de Predestinatione et gratia Dei Salutari. Exercitatio ii., pp. 495 et seq.

provision which God has made for imparting to men individually the blessings which Christ purchased, may be ranked under two general heads,—namely, first, outward privileges or means of grace, the knowledge of the way of salvation, and the offers and invitations of the gospel; and, secondly, what is commonly called grace itself, or the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit upon men's minds, enabling or assisting them to repent and believe. We have already considered the first of these subjects, and have entered upon the explanation of the second,—stating, generally, the Arminian doctrine of sufficient grace, bestowed upon all men who hear the gospel, to enable them to believe it if they choose; and the Calvinistic doctrine of effectual calling and efficacious grace, bestowed only upon some, and constituting the true cause or reason why they believe and are converted, while others continue in their natural state of impenitence and unbelief. The establishment of the doctrine of special distinguishing grace, bestowed by God on some, and not on others,—and certainly producing in all on whom it is bestowed faith and regeneration,—may be said to terminate the controversy between Calvinists and Arminians upon this important point.

The controversy, however, has branched out into several other questions, about which—though they are all virtually included under that of special distinguishing grace—it may be proper to give a brief explanation, especially as I have not yet adverted, directly and formally, to the point on which the Arminians commonly represent the whole controversy upon this subject as turning,—namely, what they call the irresistibility of grace. Arminius himself, and the more evangelical of those who have generally been called after his name, professing to hold the total depravity of man by nature, have asserted the necessity of the special supernatural agency of the Spirit to the production of faith and regeneration; and, in general terms, have indeed ascribed these results wholly to the grace of God and the operation of the Spirit; while they professed to be anxious only to show, that, as to the mode of the Spirit's operation, it is not irresistible. The discussions, however, which have taken place upon this subject, have made it manifest that there are other deviations from sound doctrine, on the subject of the work of the Spirit in producing faith and regeneration, into which Arminians are naturally, if not necessarily, led; and the subject is inseparably connected with



right views of the entire depravity of man, and of his inability, in his natural state, to will or to do anything spiritually good,—subjects on the consideration of which, for reasons formerly stated, I do not at present enter.

Arminius, in his declaration addressed to the States of Holland, in 1608, the year before his death, stated his views upon the subject in this way: “I ascribe to grace THE COMMENCEMENT, THE CONTINUANCE, AND THE CONSUMMATION OF ALL GOOD,—and to such an extent do I carry its influence, that a man, though already regenerate, can neither conceive, will nor do any good at all, nor resist any evil temptation, *without this preventing and exciting, this following and co-operating grace.* From this statement it will clearly appear, that I am by no means injurious or unjust to grace, by attributing, as it is reported of me, too much to man’s free-will: For the whole controversy reduces itself to the solution of this question, “Is the grace of God a certain, irresistible force?” That is, the controversy does not relate to those actions or operations which may be ascribed to grace, (for I acknowledge and inculcate as many of these actions and operations as any man ever did,) but it relates solely to the mode of operation,—*whether it be irresistible or not*: With respect to which, I believe, according to the Scriptures, that many persons resist the Holy Spirit and reject the grace that is offered.”\* In like manner, as we have seen, his followers at the Synod of Dort, in their declaration as to the third and fourth articles, spoke to the same effect; though some of the very same men who professed so much scriptural truth at that time,—and especially Episcopius,—afterwards adopted, or at least promulgated, sentiments much more Pelagian, in regard to the nature and necessity of grace. It would have been well if all who have been called Arminians had ascribed as much as Arminius did to the grace of God, in the conversion and sanctification of men. But we cannot admit that, on the ground of the statement we have quoted,—strong and plausible as it is,—he can be proved to be guiltless of attributing too much to man’s free-will, or must be regarded as giving a scriptural view of the nature and mode of the Spirit’s operation. Notwithstanding all that he has said,

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\* Nichols’ Life and Writings of Arminius, vol. i., p. 600. Arminii Opera, | p. 98. Nichols’ Calvinism and Arminianism Compared.

in ascribing to grace, and to the operation of the Spirit, the commencement, the continuance, and consummation of all good,—that is,—*for it does not necessarily mean more than this*,—that nothing spiritually good is produced in man, without, or except by, the agency of the Spirit, it is quite possible that he may have held such a co-operation or concurrence of man himself, in the exercise of his own natural powers and capacities, with the Spirit, in the whole process by which faith and regeneration are produced, as to neutralize or obscure the grace of God in the matter; and to make man a joint or concurrent cause with God even in originating those changes which are indispensable to salvation. *And this, indeed, is just what is implied in the denial, that the mode of the Spirit's operation in producing conversion is irresistible.*

Calvinists, indeed, do not admit that it is an accurate mode of stating the question, to put it in this form,—whether or not the grace or gracious operation of the Spirit be irresistible? for they do not dispute that, in some sense, men *do* resist the Spirit; and they admit that resistance to the Spirit may be predicated both of the elect and of the non-elect,—the non-elect having operations of the Spirit put forth upon them which they resist or throw off, and never yield to,—and the elect having generally resisted the operations of the Spirit for a time before they yielded to them. Accordingly, although the only thing in the Arminian declaration, as given in to the Synod of Dort, which was regarded as containing a positive error in doctrine, was the assertion that, as to the mode of the Spirit's operation in conversion, it was not irresistible, there is not, in the canons of the synod, any formal deliverance, *in terminis*, upon this precise point, though all that the Arminians meant to assert, by denying the irresistibility of grace, is clearly and fully condemned. This statement likewise holds true, in all its parts, of our own Confession of Faith. It does not contain, *in terminis*, an assertion of the irresistibility, or a denial of the resistibility, of the grace of God in conversion; but it contains a clear and full assertion of the whole truth which Arminians have generally intended to deny, by asserting the resistibility of grace, and which Calvinists have intended to assert, when—accommodating themselves to the Arminian phraseology, but not admitting its accuracy—they have maintained that grace in conversion is irresistible.

They object to the word irresistible, as applied to their doctrine, because of its ambiguity,—because, in one sense, they hold grace

in conversion to be resistible, and in another, not. It may be said to be resistible, and to be actually resisted, inasmuch as motions or operations of the Spirit upon men's minds—which, in their general nature and bearing, may be said to tend towards the production of conversion—are resisted, or not yielded to, by the non-elect, and for a time even by the elect; while it may be said to be irresistible,—or, as Calvinists usually prefer calling it, insuperable, or infrustrable, or certainly efficacious,—inasmuch as, according to their doctrine, whenever the gracious divine power that is sufficient to produce conversion, and necessary to effect it, is put forth, it certainly overcomes all the resistance that men are able to make, and infallibly produces the result.

And here I may remark by the way, that it is a point sometimes controverted among Calvinists themselves, whether the non-elect are ever the subjects of motions or operations of the Spirit, which, in their own nature, tend towards conversion, or possess, in a measure, those general properties which, when they possessed them in a higher degree, produce conversion. Upon this point, our Confession of Faith\* takes the side of asserting that they “may have some common operations of the Spirit;” and this view of the matter is more accordant than the opposite one with what seems to be indicated by Scripture upon the subject, while it is not liable to any serious objection. But Calvinists, while differing upon this point,—which is not of much intrinsic importance,—all admit that the elect do for a time resist divine grace, or the gracious operations of the Spirit; while they all maintain that, whenever that special grace which is necessary to conversion, and which alone is sufficient to effect it, is put forth, men cannot resist, or overcome, or frustrate it, and do, in fact, certainly and necessarily yield to its influence. This doctrine is asserted in our Confession of Faith—not in express terms, indeed, but plainly and unequivocally—in this way: It declares that, in the work of effectual calling,—which is asserted to be wrought in “all those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only,”—He renews their wills, and, by His almighty power, determines them to that which is good, and effectually draws them to Jesus Christ, yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace; and it further declares, that, in this process of effectual calling, man is “altogether

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\* C. x., s. iv.

passive," "*until*, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it."

If the depravity of man by nature is so entire or total, as that he labours under an inability to will anything spiritually good, and therefore—for this is a necessary consequence of his want of ability to will—must have his will renewed by a power from without himself, and must be wholly passive in the commencement of the process by which this renovation of the will is effected, then it is evident that—though he may have resisted an inferior measure of the power that tended in the direction of renewing him—the power by which the renovation of the will was actually effected must have been such that he could not resist or overcome it,—that, whenever power sufficient to effect such a result was really put forth, it must certainly remove every obstacle, and infallibly accomplish the result intended. If it were a power that could be overcome or frustrated by anything in man, it would not be *sufficient* to effect the result, because there is no other source from which any assistance or co-operation in producing the result could be derived. Man himself is dead in sins and trespasses,—utterly destitute, until his will has been renewed, of any ability to will what is good; and *therefore* the power which is sufficient or adequate to renew his will, must be such as *certainly* to overcome all obstacles, and infallibly produce the necessary change. The Arminian doctrine is, that when all the means have been used, and the whole power has been put forth, that are sufficient to produce faith and regeneration, and that do, in point of fact, produce them, wherever they are produced, all men may, and many do, resist these means and this power, and, in the exercise of their own free-will, continue impenitent and unbelieving, overcoming or frustrating the very same power or agency—the same, both in kind and degree—to which others yield, and are, in consequence, converted and saved. This is plainly—whatever general statements may be made about the necessity of divine grace—to ascribe to men a natural power to will what is spiritually good, and to make this natural power to will what is spiritually good the real determining cause of their conversion,—that which discriminates or distinguishes those who repent and believe from those who continue in impenitence and unbelief. Men attribute too much to man's free-will,—to adopt the language of Arminius,—when they ascribe



to it any power to will what is spiritually good, or any activity or power of co-operating with divine grace in the origin or commencement of the process of regeneration. And unless this be ascribed to it, the power by which regeneration is actually effected must be irresistible,—must be such that men cannot frustrate or overcome it.

It will be seen, then, that the doctrine of the irresistibility, or insuperability, of divine grace in conversion is a necessary consequence of scriptural views of man's entire depravity, and his inability by nature to will anything spiritually good; and that all that Calvinists intend to set forth in maintaining this doctrine, is declared when they assert that it is necessary that men's will be renewed, and that, in the commencement of the process by which this renovation is effected, they are wholly passive,—incapable of co-operating with divine grace, or with the Holy Spirit operating upon them, until He has, by His own almighty power, effected an important change upon them. This change is sometimes called regeneration, when that word is taken in its most limited sense, as distinguished from conversion; and, *in that case*, regeneration means the first implantation of spiritual life,—the process of vivification, or making alive,—while conversion describes the process by which men, now quickened and renewed,—no longer passive, but active,—do willingly turn to God, and embrace Jesus Christ as all their salvation and all their desire; and the whole is comprehended under the designation of *effectual calling*, which includes the whole work of the Spirit, in applying to men the blessings which Christ purchased, and in effecting that important change in their condition and character which is, in every instance, indispensable to salvation.

An essential part of this process is the renovation of the will, or the giving it a new capacity or tendency,—a power of willing what is spiritually good,—whereas before it could will only what was spiritually evil. And it is important to have our attention directed to this feature in the process, as it is *that* right views of which most directly oppose and exclude Arminian errors upon his subject. In the description of effectual calling, given in the Shorter Catechism, it is said to be “a work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, He doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us

in the gospel." The general principles of the Arminians upon this subject lead them to deny the renovation of the will, as a distinct step in this process. If there be such a thing as a renovation of the will, it must manifestly, from the nature of the case, be effected by a divine power; and that power, finding nothing previously existing in or about the will, that can assist or co-operate in the production of the result of its own renovation, must be exerted in such a measure, in effecting the object, as to be insuperable, or certainly and infallibly victorious. The Arminians, in denying the insuperability of the grace of God in conversion, and in maintaining that, even when a divine power sufficient to produce conversion is put forth, men may frustrate it and continue unconverted, not only ascribe to the will of man, in his natural state, a power or capacity, in regard to what is spiritually good, which is inconsistent with the necessity of its being renewed, but also assign to the truth, or the word, an influence or efficacy in the matter which Calvinists generally regard as opposed to the teaching of Scripture; and hence the importance, not only of holding the necessity of the renovation of the will, but also of regarding this as a distinct step in the Spirit's work of effectual calling, from the enlightening the mind in the knowledge of Christ.

Arminians commonly resolve regeneration, not into an almighty and insuperable agency of the Spirit, operating directly upon the will, in renovating it, by giving it a new capacity, tendency, or direction, but into what they commonly call a moral suasion,—that is, into the mere influence of motives addressed to the understanding, and, through the understanding, operating upon the will,—in other words, into the mere influence of the truth, opened up and impressed by the Spirit; while Calvinists have usually maintained that there is a direct and immediate operation of the Spirit upon the will itself, and not merely through the influence of the truth operating upon the understanding.\*

The distinctions and explanations, which have been put forth in the discussions upon this subject, are too numerous and minute to admit of our attempting any exposition of them; we can merely point it out as a subject which has been much discussed,

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\* Turretin. *Loc. xv.*, *Qu. vi.*; *Mastricht, Lib. vi.*, *c. iii.*

and is entitled to some attention. The standards of our church, while they do not give any formal deliverance upon this subject, as it has been usually handled in theological discussions, and no deliverance at all upon some of the minuter questions which have been controverted among Calvinists regarding it, plainly enough indicate, not only that it is necessary that the will should be renewed, but also that this step in the process of effectual calling is distinct from any mere agency of the Spirit in enlightening the understanding,—in opening up and impressing the truth which God has revealed. And I have no doubt that this view corresponds most fully with all that Scripture makes known to us about men's natural condition of darkness and depravity,—about the nature of faith and regeneration, and the agency and the means by which they are produced.

The Arminians usually object to these views about the certain efficacy or insuperability of the grace of God in conversion, that they are inconsistent with the nature of the human will, and with the qualities that attach to it. They usually represent our doctrine as implying that men are forced to believe and to turn to God against their will, or whether they will or not. This is a misrepresentation. Calvinists hold no such opinion; and it cannot be shown that their doctrine requires them to hold it. Indeed, the full statement of their doctrine upon the subject excludes or contradicts it. Our Confession of Faith, after giving an account of effectual calling, which plainly implies that the grace of God in conversion is an exercise of omnipotence, and cannot be successfully resisted, adds, "Yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace." That special operation of the Spirit, which cannot be overcome or frustrated, is just the renovation of the will itself, by which a power of willing what is spiritually good—a power which it has not of itself in its natural condition, and which it could not receive from any source but a divine and almighty agency—is communicated to it. In the exercise of this new power, men are able to co-operate with the Spirit of God, guiding and directing them; and they do this, and do it, not by constraint, but willingly,—being led, under the influence of the news concerning Christ, and the way of salvation which He has opened up to and impressed upon them, and the motives which these views suggest, to embrace Christ, and to choose that better part which shall never be taken away from

them. In the commencement of the process, they are not actors at all; they are wholly passive,—the subjects of a divine operation. And from the time when they begin to act in the matter, or really to *do* anything, they act freely and voluntarily, guided by rational motives, derived from the truths which their eyes have been opened to see, and which, humanly speaking, might have sooner led them to turn to God, had not the moral impotency of their wills to anything spiritually good prevented this result. There is certainly nothing in all this to warrant the representation, that, upon Calvinistic principles, men are forced to repent and believe against their wills, or whether they will or not.

Neither is there anything in this view of the subject that can be shown to be inconsistent with any truth concerning the will of man, or the properties attaching to it, established, either by an examination of man's mental constitution, or by the word of God. It is plainly inconsistent, both with reason and with revelation, to suppose that God has created anything which He cannot regulate and direct, absolutely and infallibly, and which He cannot regulate and direct without treating it inconsistently with its proper nature,—the nature and qualities He has assigned to it. We cannot suppose that God should have bestowed any powers or properties upon any creatures which would place them beyond His entire and absolute control, or would require Him, in any case, in order to effect any of His purposes with them or by them, to exercise His omnipotence, in a manner that runs counter to the constitution He has assigned to them. He does, indeed, exercise His omnipotence in renewing men's wills, and giving them a capacity for willing what is spiritually good; but, in doing so, He is only restoring them, in so far, to the condition in which He originally created them. And in the mode of doing it, while there is an exercise of omnipotence, effecting a change upon them, there is nothing done that interferes with the constitution of man, as man, or with the nature of will, as will. Our Confession teaches,\* that "God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined, to good or evil." But this does not imply that God Himself cannot, if He chooses, certainly and effectually determine it to good,

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\* C. ix., s. 1.



—whatever may be necessary, in existing circumstances, in order to secure this,—without taking away the natural liberty with which He has endued it. This natural liberty does indeed imply a possibility of men yielding to temptation, and falling into sin; but it does not imply that God cannot, by an exercise of His omnipotence, recover men from *any* of the consequences of the sin into which, from the abuse of their freedom of will, they may have fallen; and do this without taking from them, or obstructing, the exercise of that freedom which He originally conferred upon them.

In short, the will of man could not originally have possessed, and never could by any process acquire, any capacity or property, in virtue of which it should be placed beyond God's absolute control, or which should prevent Him from regulating and determining, at all times and in all circumstances, the character and actions of His creatures. Nothing is more clearly revealed in Scripture than this, that when God enables men to repent and believe, He puts forth upon them an exercise of almighty power, analogous to that by which He created all things out of nothing, or by which He raises the dead; but there is no ground for asserting that, even upon the Calvinistic view of the nature of this process, He does not treat man, in effecting this change, according to his proper nature as a rational and responsible being. We are very sure that no property does, or can, attach to the will of man, whether fallen or unfallen, that can take it beyond the reach of God's sovereign control, or prevent Him from directing its operations, without interfering, by a mere exercise of omnipotence, with its true nature and essential properties. Of all the capacities or properties that have ever been ascribed to the human will, the one that has most the appearance of being inconsistent with God's supremacy over it, is what is called by the Arminians its self-determining power; and yet I doubt if there are sufficiently clear and certain reasons for denying even this view of the freedom of the will, upon the mere ground that, if the will possess this self-determining power, it would be impossible for God to exercise absolute control over its operations. But if this cannot be clearly and certainly made out, still less can it be proved, on the other hand, that any agency which Calvinists ascribe to God in renewing the will, is inconsistent with a full regard to its true nature and essential properties,—to anything that can be shown to attach to it.

It is, of course, no objection to the Calvinistic doctrine of efficacious, insuperable grace in conversion,—though some of the more Pelagian Arminians have sometimes represented it in that light,—that it deprives men of everything like merit or ground of boasting in repenting and believing. If it did not do so, it would not be the doctrine of the sacred Scriptures; and one great objection to the Arminian doctrine,—that men, even when a divine power amply *sufficient* to produce in them faith and regeneration, has been put forth, may still overcome and frustrate the exercise of this power, and continue unconverted,—is just this, that this doctrine, with whatever general professions about man's depravity and moral impotency by nature, and about the necessity of the gracious operation of the Spirit in producing conversion, it may be accompanied, practically assigns to men themselves, and not to God, the regulating or determining power in the matter,—the power by which, in each case, it *is settled* that repentance and conversion shall take place,—that is, that a man shall be put in actual possession of all spiritual blessings, and finally of the kingdom of heaven.

The difficulty is much more serious that is founded upon the case of those who are not converted, though they have the gospel offers and invitations addressed to them; or, when the special distinguishing efficacious grace of God is not put forth, who continue in their sins, and finally perish. The difficulty, of course, is to reconcile their responsibility for their impenitence and unbelief,—their guilt and just liability to punishment on this account,—with the views which have been explained as to the way and manner in which the conversion of those who are converted is effected. This is, virtually, the great difficulty which is commonly urged against the whole Calvinistic scheme of theology; it is usually discussed in connection with the subject of predestination. To the examination of that subject we must now proceed; and under that head we will have to advert to the considerations by which this difficulty has been usually met and disposed of.

#### *Sec. VII.—The Decrees of God.*

Having been led to enter upon the consideration of the Arminian controversy by an examination of the extent of the atonement,—because it was most natural and convenient to finish, without turning aside to any other topic, the subject of the atonement,

which we had been examining as an important department of the Socinian controversy,—we endeavoured to improve this order in the arrangement of the topics, for the purpose of bringing out more fully the important principle, that right scriptural views of the true nature and immediate bearing and effects of the atonement are sufficient to settle the question of its extent; and of showing also that the doctrine of a limited destination of the atonement—which is commonly reckoned the weakest part of the Calvinistic system—is quite able to stand upon its own distinct and appropriate evidence, without being dependent, for the proof of its truth, *merely* upon the connection subsisting between it and the other doctrines of the system. Having, in this way, been led to advert to the connection subsisting between the impetration and the application of the blessings of redemption,—to the connection subsisting between the sufferings and death of Christ, and not merely reconciliation, pardon, and acceptance (the blessings which involve or imply a change in men's state in relation to God and His law), but also those blessings which involve or imply a change in their character, and prepare them for the enjoyment of God,—we have further thought it best, in proceeding with the examination of the Arminian controversy, to finish the subject of the application of the blessings of redemption, or the investigation of what it is that God does in bestowing upon men individually the blessings which Christ purchased for them. Accordingly, we have explained the doctrine of our standards in regard to the work of the Spirit in effectual calling,—the doctrine of special, distinguishing, efficacious, insuperable grace in the production of faith, and regeneration, wherever they are produced,—as opposed to the Arminian doctrine of universal vocation, accompanied by the bestowal upon all of grace sufficient to produce faith and regeneration. The connection of the topics, as forming part of the development of a great scheme for securing the salvation of sinners, has thus been preserved; and some other collateral advantages, arising from the order we have been led to adopt, may appear in the course of the investigation of the subject of predestination, which we have hitherto reserved, but on which we must now enter.

We have now to consider the important and difficult topic of predestination, which formed the subject of the first of the five points in the original discussions between Calvinists and Armi-

nians, about the time of the Synod of Dort, and in connection with which are usually considered most of those general topics that bear upon all the leading doctrines in regard to which the Calvinistic and Arminian systems of theology differ from each other. The consideration of this great doctrine runs up into the most profound and inaccessible subjects that can occupy the minds of men,—the nature and attributes, the purposes and the actings, of the infinite and incomprehensible Jehovah,—viewed especially in their bearing upon the everlasting destinies of His intelligent creatures. The peculiar nature of the subject certainly demands, in right reason, that it should ever be approached and considered with the profoundest humility, caution, and reverence, as it brings us into contact, on the one side, with a subject so inaccessible to our full comprehension as the eternal purposes of the divine mind; and, on the other, with a subject so awful and overwhelming as the everlasting misery of an innumerable multitude of our fellow-men. Many men have discussed the subject in this spirit, but many also have indulged in much presumptuous and irreverent speculation regarding it. There is probably no subject that has occupied more of the attention of intelligent men in every age. It has been most fully discussed in all its bearings, philosophical, theological, and practical; and if there be any subject of speculation with respect to which we are warranted in saying that it has been exhausted, it is this.

Some, at least, of the topics comprehended under this general head have been discussed by almost every philosopher of eminence in ancient as well as in modern times; and it is to this day a standing topic of reproach against Calvinists, that they teach the same doctrines as the ancient Stoics about fate and necessity. The subject was largely discussed in the church in the fifth and sixth centuries, in connection with the Pelagian and semi-Pelagian controversies. It exercised most fully the subtilty of the schoolmen, many of whom held sounder views upon this subject than might have been expected from the general character and tendency, in other respects, of the theology that then generally prevailed,—a fact which, it appears to me, may be fairly regarded as affording a presumption that Calvinistic doctrines upon this subject are the only ones that can really stand a thorough investigation, even upon philosophical grounds, or as mere subjects of intellectual speculation. The subject was not much discussed at the era of the Reformation,



for the Reformers were of one mind concerning it; and the Romanists did not then openly and formally deny the doctrine which the Reformers taught upon this point,—though they laboured to excite a prejudice against the Reformed doctrine, as making God the author of sin. Protestants, however, soon differed upon this and cognate questions; and it has ever since formed a prominent feature in a large proportion of theological discussions. All that the highest human ability, ingenuity, and acuteness can effect, has been brought to bear upon the discussion of this subject; but the difficulties attaching to it have never been fully solved, and we are well warranted in saying that they never will, unless God give us either a fuller revelation or greatly enlarged capacities,—although, perhaps, it would be more correct to say, that, *from the very nature of the case*, a finite being never can fully comprehend it, since this would imply that he could fully comprehend the infinite mind.

It is not practicable, and it would not be at all profitable, to enter at any length into the intricacies of this subject,—into the innumerable speculations which have been put forth concerning it. Here, as in regard to most subjects, the topics which it is most important for us clearly to apprehend and to remember, are just the plainest, the most obvious and palpable, views of the question; and to these, therefore, we will confine our attention.

The subject may be said, in general, to embrace the investigation of the plan which God has formed for administering the government of the world, and especially of His rational creatures, and more particularly for regulating the actions and determining the everlasting destinies of man. The materials to be employed in the investigation are, generally, the knowledge we may possess concerning God's attributes, character, and ways,—especially any knowledge which He may have Himself directly communicated to us upon these subjects; and the survey of what He actually has done and is doing in the government of the world,—viewed in the light of His word, or in connection with any information He may have given us, as to the principle that regulates His procedure. The subject embraces the investigation of such questions as these: Has God formed a plan for governing the world,—for regulating or controlling the actions, and determining the fate, of His rational creatures? If so, when was this plan formed, what are the principles on which it was formed, and the qualities that attach to it? What provision has He made for carrying it

into execution, and what are the principles that regulate the execution of it, and determine its results? Thus wide and various, thus profound and incomprehensible, are the topics involved in the investigation of this subject; and the slightest reference to their general nature and import should impress upon us the necessity of proceeding in the investigation with the profoundest reverence and caution,—of abandoning all confidence in our own discoveries and speculations,—and of submitting our understandings implicitly to anything which God may have revealed to us concerning it.

Let us, first, advert to the meaning and ordinary application of some of the principal terms usually employed in connection with this subject, and then to the settlement of the state of the question as a topic of controversial discussion. The principal terms employed in describing and discussing this subject are these,—the decrees of God, predestination, election, and reprobation. “The decrees of God” is the widest and most comprehensive of these terms, and describes generally the purposes or resolutions which God has formed, and in accordance with which He regulates His own procedure, or orders whatever comes to pass in the government of the world. That God has, and must have, formed decrees—that is, purposes or resolutions—for the regulation of His own procedure, must be admitted by all who regard Him as possessed of intelligence and wisdom; and the disputes which have been raised upon this subject, respect not the existence of the divine decrees, but the foundation on which they rest,—the properties which attach to them,—and the objects which they embrace.

Predestination, or fore-ordination, is sometimes used in so wide a sense, as to comprehend the whole decrees or purposes of God,—the whole plan which He has formed,—including all the resolutions He has adopted for the regulation of the government of the world; and sometimes it is used in a more limited sense, as including only His decrees or purposes with respect to the ultimate destinies of men, as distinguished from the other departments of His government. It is sometimes used in a still more limited sense, as synonymous with election, or that department of God’s decrees or purposes which respects the salvation of those men who are saved, without including reprobation. Election, of course, describes God’s decree or purpose to choose some men out of the human race to be saved, and at length to save them; while repro-

bation is generally used by theologians to describe the decrees or purposes of God, whatever these may be, in regard to those of the human race who ultimately perish.

Little more can be said in the explanation of these terms, without entering into topics which belong rather to the state of the question; but, before proceeding to this, we may make a remark or two in illustration of the phraseology employed upon this subject in the standards of our church. The general title of the chapter in the Confession where this subject is stated,—the third,—is “Of God’s Eternal Decree;” and under this head is embodied a statement of the leading truths taught in Scripture concerning the whole plan and purposes formed by God from eternity, and executed in time, in governing the world, and in determining the everlasting destiny of all His creatures. God’s decree, made from eternity, is represented as comprehending everything that takes place in time, so that He has ordained whatsoever comes to pass. In proceeding to state the substance of what is taught in Scripture as to God’s decree or eternal purpose, with respect to the destiny of His intelligent creatures, the Confession represents men and angels as equally included in the decree; while it uses a different phraseology in describing the bearing of the decree upon those of them whose ultimate destiny is life or happiness, from what is employed in regard to those of them whose ultimate destiny is death or misery. The result, in both cases, takes place, with respect to angels and to men, by virtue of God’s decree; but one class,—the saved,—both angels and men, are said to be “predestinated” by the decree to life, while the other class are said to be “fore-ordained” by the decree to death. The state is this:\* “By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory” (the whole sentence being under the regimen of this important clause), “some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death;” and that the substitution of the word “fore-ordained” for “predestinated” was intentional, and designed to mark a distinction in the two cases, is evident from the words which immediately follow in the fourth section, where, resuming the whole subject, without reference to the different results of life and death, but stating a point common to both, it introduces *both* words, in order to

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\* C. iii., sec. iii.

include both classes, in this way: "These angels and men, thus predestinated and fore-ordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed." It can scarcely be said that, either etymologically, or according to the general usage of theologians, there is any difference of meaning between the words "predestinated" and "fore-ordained;" but Calvinists, in general, have held that there is an important difference between the way and manner in which the decree of election bears or operates upon the condition and fate of those who are saved, and that in which the decree of reprobation, as it is often called, bears or operates upon the condition of those who perish; and the *existence* of this difference, though without any exact specification of its nature, the compilers of our Confession seem to have intended to indicate, by restricting the word "predestinate" to the elect, the saved; and using the word "fore-ordained" in regard to the rest. The Confession does not make use of the word "reprobation," which is commonly employed by theologians upon this subject; and the reason of this undoubtedly was, that it is an expression very liable to be misunderstood and perverted, and thus to excite a prejudice against the truth which Calvinistic theologians intend to convey by it. The Confession further says, that "those men who are predestinated unto life, God . . . hath from eternity also chosen or elected in Christ unto everlasting glory;" that "God hath appointed the elect unto glory," and has also, "by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, fore-ordained all the means thereunto;"\*—so that they certainly and infallibly attain to eternal life, in accordance with the provisions of the scheme which God has devised for the salvation of sinners. Though the Confession does not use the word "reprobation," and does not apply the word "predestinate" to those who perish, it teaches explicitly, that, by the decree of God, some men are fore-ordained to everlasting death; and the further explanation given of this subject is, † that "the rest of mankind,"—that is, all those not predestinated unto everlasting life, not chosen or elected in Christ,— "God was pleased . . . to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice,"—these expressions being descriptive of two distinct acts, which Calvinistic theologians usually regard as included in what is

\* Secs. v., vi.

† Sec. vii.



commonly called the decree of reprobation,—namely, first, *præteritio*, or passing by, which is an act of sovereignty; and, secondly, *prædamnatio*, which is a judicial act, described in the Confession as “ordaining them to dishonour and wrath *for their sin.*”

The views generally entertained by Calvinists upon this subject have been, in some measure, indicated by the explanations we have given of the statements of the Confession. But it will be proper to explain them somewhat more fully, and to compare our doctrine with that of the Arminians, that we may bring out exactly the state of the question. The whole controversy may be said to be involved in the settlement of the question as to the *nature* and *properties* of the divine decrees.

The doctrine generally held by Calvinists upon this subject is,—as the Confession says,—that God, from all eternity, did freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass,—that is, that He has eternally formed, and does in time execute, a plan for the government of the world, including in it all actions and events; so that every event that takes place comes to pass, as God had from all eternity purposed and arranged that it should come to pass, and *because* He had so purposed and arranged. If this doctrine about the divine decrees, in general, be well founded, it determines the whole question about election and reprobation, which are included under the decrees. If the ordinary actions of men are fore-ordained by God, of course their ultimate fate or destiny must also, in every instance, have been determined. The Arminians generally hold, that God only foresees all the events and actions that take place, but deny that He fore-ordained them. They admit that He exerted some kind or degree of efficiency in actually bringing them about; but deny that, in doing so, He was carrying into effect, in each case, a purpose which He had formed from eternity, and which He had resolved to execute; or that it was His agency that exerted any determining influence in causing them to come to pass. On this subject, the controversy, as usually conducted, is made to turn principally upon what are called the properties or qualities of the divine decrees; for, that God, in some sense, did make decrees, or form purposes, in regard to the way in which He would govern the world, is not disputed, except by Socinians, who deny that He could even foresee future contingent events, which were, in any sense, dependent upon the volitions of responsible beings. And the chief questions usually discussed with reference to the general

properties of the divine decrees are these two:—First, Are they conditional or not? Secondly, Are they unchangeable or not?

It seems pretty plain, that if they are conditional and changeable, as the Arminians hold, they cannot, in any proper sense, be the decrees or purposes of a Being of infinite power, knowledge, and wisdom; in other words, the Arminian doctrine amounts to a virtual denial of the existence of divine decrees, in any proper sense of the word. If God has formed plans and purposes with regard to the actual administration of the whole government of the world, and the regulation of man's actions and fate,—and if these plans or purposes were not conditional and changeable,—that is, if they were not left dependent for their execution upon what creatures might do, independently of God, and liable to be changed or altered, according to the manner in which these creatures might choose to act,—and all this seems to be necessarily involved in all that we know concerning the divine perfections, both from reason and Scripture,—then the substance of all this truth is just expressed in the doctrine taught in our Confession, that “God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass.”

The foundations of this great doctrine are these:—that unless God left the world, and all the creatures whom He had formed, to rule and govern themselves, altogether independently of Him, He must, from eternity, have formed plans and purposes for regulating *its* affairs,—for determining and controlling *their* actions,—that these plans and purposes could not be conditional and changeable,—that is, left to be dependent upon the volitions of creatures, and liable to be changed, according to the nature and results of these volitions,—but must have been formed in the exercise of His infinite knowledge, and all His other infinite perfections, and must therefore certainly and infallibly be in time carried into full effect. These are the topics usually discussed under the head “De Decretis Dei,” taken in its widest sense; and it is manifest, as we formerly remarked, that if the Calvinistic doctrine upon this great *general* question be established, this settles all the questions bearing upon the subjects of election and reprobation, or the purposes and actings of God with respect to the character and fate of men individually. If God has unchangeably fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass, and if, in point of fact, some men are saved and the rest

perish, then it must be true that He has predestinated some men to everlasting life, and has fore-ordained others to everlasting death.

It is, however, upon the field of this latter and more limited question that the controversy has been chiefly conducted; and there is no doubt that there are more full and abundant materials furnished to us in Scripture upon this more limited topic, than upon the wider and more comprehensive one of the divine decrees in general, in their bearing upon whatsoever comes to pass. We have seen, in the Confession, what is the doctrine held by Calvinists upon this subject. It is in substance this,—that from all eternity God chose or elected some men—certain definite persons of the human race—to everlasting life; that He decreed or determined, certainly and infallibly, and not conditionally and mutably, to bring *those* persons to salvation by a Redeemer; that in making this selection of some men, and in decreeing to save *them*, He was not influenced or determined by anything existing in them, or foreseen in them,—such as faith or good works,—by which they were distinguished from other men, or by anything out of Himself, by any reason known to us, or comprehensible by us; and that this eternal purpose or decree He certainly and infallibly executes, in regard to each and every one included under it; while all the rest of men not thus elected He decreed to pass by,—to leave in their natural state of sin and misery, and finally to punish eternally for their sin.

The Arminians, on the contrary, hold that God made no decree,—formed no purpose,—bearing immediately upon the salvation of men, except this general one, that He would save and admit to heaven all who should, in fact, repent and believe, and that He would condemn and consign to punishment all who should continue impenitent and unbelieving. God having formed this general purpose, and announced it to men, and having sent His Son into the world to remove the obstacles that stood in the way of their salvation, virtually left it to men themselves to comply or not with the terms or conditions He had prescribed, having no purpose to exercise, and, of course, not in fact exercising, any determining influence upon the result in any case.

Some Arminians profess to believe, that God has made, from eternity, fixed and unchangeable decrees, with respect to the eternal condition of men individually. But those of them who, in accommodation to the language of Scripture, choose to adopt this

mode of expressing their statements, do not, in reality, hold anything different from the rest; for they make the sole ground or foundation of these decrees or purposes, in regard to the salvation of individuals, God's foreknowledge of the faith and repentance of some, and of the unbelief and impenitence of others. All that is implied in the election of a particular individual to life is, that God foresees that that individual will repent and believe; and that, on this ground, this being the cause or condition moving Him thereto, God decrees or purposes to admit him to heaven, and to give him everlasting life,—the result being thus determined by the man himself; and God's decree, with respect to his salvation, being nothing more than a recognition of him as one who would, without God's efficacious determining interposition, comply with the conditions announced to him. This being all that any Arminians do, or can, admit, as to the bearing or import of any decree or purpose of God, upon the salvation of men individually, those Arminians act much the more manly and consistent part, who deny altogether any decree or purpose of God, with respect to the salvation of men individually.

The fundamental position of the Arminians, at the time of the Synod of Dort, was, that the only and *whole* decree of election consisted in this, that God had formed a general purpose or determination, that all who should repent and believe would be saved, and that all who should continue impenitent and unbelieving would be condemned, without any reference whatever to individuals, except the bare foresight or foreknowledge of what would be, in fact, the result in the case of each person. A decree or purpose, based or founded solely upon the foreknowledge or foresight of the faith and obedience of individuals, is, of course, the same thing as the entire want or non-existence of any purpose or decree in regard to them. It determines nothing concerning them,—bestows nothing upon them,—secures nothing to them. It is a mere word or name, the use of which only tends to involve the subject in obscurity and confusion; whereas, upon Calvinistic principles, God's electing decree, in choosing some men to life, is the effectual source, or determining cause, of the faith and holiness which are ultimately wrought in them, and of the eternal happiness to which they at last attain. God elects certain men to life, not because He foresees that they will repent, and believe, and persevere in faith and holiness, but for reasons no doubt fully



accordant with His wisdom and justice, though wholly unknown to us, and certainly not based upon anything foreseen in them, as distinguished from other men; and then further decrees to give to those men; in due time, everything necessary, in order to their being admitted to the enjoyment of eternal life, in accordance with the provisions of the scheme which His wisdom has devised for saving sinners.

The Arminians do not well know how to explain the source of the faith and holiness by which some men come to be distinguished, and to be prepared for heaven. They do not venture, as the Socinians do, to exclude God's agency wholly from the production of them; and they can scarcely deny, that whatever God does in the production of them, He decreed or resolved to do, and decreed and resolved to do it from eternity; and on this account, as well as for other reasons, they are much fonder of dwelling upon reprobation than election; because they think that, in regard to the former subject, they can make out a more plausible case than with respect to the latter, if not in defending their own views, at least in assailing those of the Calvinists. The Arminians at the Synod of Dort wished to begin, under the first article, with discussing the subject of reprobation, and complained of it as injustice, when the synod refused to concede this demand.\* The demand was obviously unreasonable; it did not, and could not, spring from an honest love of truth, and it was not fitted to promote the cause of truth; and yet this has been substantially, though not in form, the course generally adopted by Arminians, in stating and discussing this subject. They usually endeavour to excite a prejudice against the doctrine of reprobation, or God's decree or purpose with relation to those who ultimately perish, often by distorting and misrepresenting the views held by Calvinists upon this subject; and then, after having produced all they can allege against this doctrine, they argue that, as there is no such thing as reprobation, so neither can there be any such thing as election.

Calvinists, on the contrary, usually produce first the evidence for the doctrine of election, and then show, that this doctrine being once established, all that they hold on the subject of reprobation follows as a matter of course. They do not, indeed, regard

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\* See the Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation, pp. 538, etc. (Edrs.)

the doctrine of reprobation as wholly dependent for its evidence upon the doctrine of election; for they believe that the doctrine of reprobation has its own distinct scriptural proof; but they think that the proof of the doctrine of election is quite sufficient to establish all they hold on the subject of reprobation, and that there are much fuller materials in Scripture bearing upon the former subject than upon the latter. It is this last consideration that establishes the utter unfairness of the course usually pursued by the Arminians, in giving priority and superior prominence to the discussion of the doctrine of reprobation. As the Scriptures give us much more information as to what God does in producing faith and regeneration in those who believe and are converted, than as to His mode of procedure in regard to those who are left in impenitence and unbelief, so it tells us much more, with respect to His decrees and purposes with regard to those who are saved, than with regard to those who perish; and if so, we ought, in our investigations into the subject, to begin with the former, and not with the latter, and to endeavour to form our opinion of what is less clearly revealed in Scripture by what is more plainly declared. Calvinists do not shrink from discussing the subject of reprobation, though, from its awful character, they have no satisfaction in dwelling upon it, and feel deeply the propriety of being peculiarly careful here not to attempt to be wise above what is written. They do not hesitate to admit that it is necessarily involved in, or deducible from, the doctrine of election;\* and they think they can fully prove and defend all that they really hold regarding it. What they hold upon this subject is this,—that God decreed, or purposed, to do from eternity what He actually does in time, in regard to those who perish, as well as in regard to those who are saved; and this is, in substance, to withhold from them, or to abstain from communicating to them, those gracious and insuperable influences of His Spirit, by which alone faith and regeneration can be produced,—to leave them in their natural state of sin, and then to inflict upon them the punishment which, by their sin, they have deserved.

Some Calvinists have been disposed to go to the other extreme

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\* “De Reprobatione nos non sumus admodum solliciti, nisi quatenus consequitur ex Electione. Positiva autem reprobatio ad exitium, sine consideratione ullius inobedientiæ, non sequitur ex Electionis doctrinâ.” Amesii Antisynodalia Scripta, p. 37.

from that which we have just exposed on the part of the Arminians. The Arminian extreme is to press reprobation, as a topic of discussion, into undue and unfair prominence; the other is, to throw it too much out of sight. Those to whom we now refer, are disposed to assert God's eternal, unconditional, and unchangeable decree or purpose, electing some men to everlasting life, and effecting and ensuring *their* salvation; but to *omit all mention* of His decrees or purposes in regard to those who ultimately perish. This is the course adopted in the seventeenth article of the Church of England, where the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination to life is set forth so plainly, that it is strange that men could have persuaded themselves that the article fairly admits of an Arminian sense, but where nothing is said of what theologians have been accustomed to discuss under the head of reprobation. Whatever respect may be entertained for the motives in which such an omission originates, or for the general character of some of the men who are influenced by them, the omission itself is unwarranted. Every one who adopts the Calvinistic interpretation of those passages of Scripture on which the doctrine of election to life is founded, must admit that there are indications in Scripture—though certainly neither so full nor so numerous—of God's decrees or purposes with respect to those who perish, as well as with respect to those who are saved. And unless men deliberately refuse to follow out their principles to their legitimate consequences, they cannot dispute that the election of some men necessarily implies a corresponding preterition, or passing by, of the rest. And though there is certainly no subject where the obligation to keep within the limits of what is revealed is more imperative, and none that ought to be stated and discussed under a deeper feeling of reverence and holy awe, yet there is no reason why, upon this, any more than other subjects, we should not ascertain and bring out all that "is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture."\*

In stating and discussing the question with respect to reprobation, Calvinists are careful to distinguish between the two different acts formerly referred to, decreed or resolved upon by God from eternity, and executed by Him in time,—the one negative and the other positive,—the one sovereign and the other judicial. The

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\* Confession, c. i., sec. vi.

first, which they call non-election, preterition, or passing by, is simply decreeing to leave—and, in consequence, leaving—men in their natural state of sin,—to withhold from them, or to abstain from conferring upon them, those special, supernatural, gracious influences, which are necessary to enable them to repent and believe; so that the result is, that they continue in their sin, with the guilt of their transgression upon their head. The second—the positive judicial act,—is more properly that which is called, in our Confession, “fore-ordaining to everlasting death,” and “ordaining those who have been passed by to dishonour and wrath *for their sin.*” God ordains none to wrath or punishment, except on account of their sin, and makes no decree to subject them to punishment which is not founded on, and has reference to, their sin, as a thing certain and contemplated. But the first, or negative, act of preterition, or passing by, is not founded upon their sin, and perseverance in it, as foreseen. Were sin foreseen the proper ground or cause of the act of preterition or passing by, preterition must have been the fate equally of all men, for all have sinned, and, of course, were foreseen as sinners. It is not alleged that those who are not elected, or who are passed by, have been always greater sinners than those who have been chosen and brought to eternal life. And with respect to the idea, that final impenitence or unbelief foreseen, might be the ground or cause of the first act of preterition, as distinguished from fore-ordination to wrath because of sin, this Calvinists regard as plainly inconsistent with the scriptural statements, which ascribe the production of faith and regeneration, and perseverance in faith and holiness, solely to the good pleasure of God and the efficacious operation of His Spirit; and with the intimations which Scripture also gives, that *there is something about God’s decrees and purposes*, even in regard to those who perish, which can be resolved only into His own good pleasure,—into the most wise and holy counsel of His will.

*Sec. VIII.—Predestination—State of the Question.*

From the account which we have given of the state of the question, in the controversy between Calvinists and Arminians, upon the subject of the divine decrees, it must be evident that there are just two theories which can be maintained upon this matter; and that all men who are able to understand the question, and



who have formed any fixed opinion regarding it, must be *either Calvinists or Arminians*; while it is also manifest that Calvinists cannot, on any point of very material importance, differ among themselves. It is, I think, of great importance, in order to our having clear and definite conceptions upon this subject, and in order to our being prepared to thread our way, most safely and successfully, through the intricacies of this controversy, that we should see clearly that there are just two alternatives, and no medium between them, and that we should firmly and distinctly apprehend what these two alternatives are.

It will be seen, from what has been said, that the course which fairness, and an impartial love of truth, obviously dictate in the investigation of this subject, is to seek to ascertain, in the first place, what we should believe as to what God has decreed from eternity, and does or effects in time, with respect to the salvation of those who are saved; and *then* consider what information we have as to His purposes and actings with respect to the ultimate destiny of those who perish. As much fuller information is given us, in Scripture, in regard to the former than the latter of these subjects, the course which right reason dictates is,—that we should first investigate the subject of election, and then consider whether there be anything revealed or established, in regard to reprobation, or God's decrees or purposes with respect to those who perish, which should confirm, or overthrow, or modify, the opinions we have formed on the subject of election,—that, in short, in the primary and fundamental investigation of the subject, we should have in view only the case of those who are saved,—the sources or causes to which this result is to be traced,—the principles by which it is to be explained,—the provision made for effecting it,—and the way in which this provision is brought into operation.

The substance of the Calvinistic doctrine is:—that God, from eternity, chose, or elected, certain men to everlasting life; and resolved, certainly and infallibly, to effect the salvation of *these* men, in accordance with the provisions of a great scheme which He had devised for this purpose,—a scheme without which no sinners could have been saved; and that, in making this selection of these individuals, who were to be certainly saved, He was not influenced or determined by the foresight or foreknowledge, that they, as distinguished from others, would repent and believe, and would persevere to the end in faith and holiness; but that,

on the contrary, their faith and conversion, their holiness and perseverance, are to be traced to His election of them, and to the effectual provision He has made for executing His electing purpose or decree, as their true and only source,—they being chosen absolutely and unconditionally to salvation; and chosen also to faith, regeneration, and perseverance, as the necessary means, and, in some sense, conditions, of salvation. Now, if this doctrine be denied, it is plain enough that the view which *must* be taken of the various points involved in the statement of it, is, in substance, this:—that God does not make from eternity any selection of some men from among the human race, whom He resolves and determines to save; that, of course, He never puts in operation any means that are fitted, and intended, to secure the salvation of those who are saved, as distinguished from others; and that, consequently, their faith and regeneration, with which salvation is inseparably connected, are not the gifts of God, effected by His agency, but are wrought by themselves, in the exercise of their own powers and capacities. On this theory, it is impossible that God could have decreed or purposed the conversion and salvation of those who are saved, any more than of those who perish. And the only way in which their salvation, individually, could have come under God's cognisance, is that merely of its being foreseen as a fact future,—which would certainly take place,—though He neither decreed nor caused it,—their own acts in repenting and believing, and persevering in faith and obedience, simply foreseen as future, being the cause, or ground, or determining principle of any acts which God either did or could pass in regard to them, individually, as distinguished from the rest of their fellowmen. This brings out the true, real, and only possible alternative in the case; and it is just, in substance, this: whether God is the true author and cause of the salvation of those who are saved? or whether this result is to be ascribed, in each case, to men themselves? Calvinistic and Arminian writers have displayed a considerable variety in their mode of stating and discussing this subject; and Calvinists, as well as Arminians, have sometimes imagined that they had fallen upon ideas and modes of statement and representation, which threw some new light upon it,—which tended to establish more firmly their own doctrine, or to expose more successfully that of their opponents. But the practical result of all these ingenious speculations has always, upon a

full examination of the subject, turned out to be, that the state of the question was found to be the same as before,—the real alternative unchanged,—the substantial materials of proof and argument unaltered; and the difficulties attaching to the opposite doctrines as strong and perplexing as ever, amid all the ingenious attempts made to modify their aspect, or to shift their position.

The practical lesson to be derived from these considerations, —considerations that must have suggested themselves to every one who has carefully surveyed this controversy,—is, that the great object we ought to aim at, in directing our attention to the study of it, is this: to form a clear and distinct apprehension of the real nature of the leading point in dispute,—of the true import and bearing of the only alternatives that can be maintained with regard to it; to familiarize our minds with definite conceptions of the meaning and evidence of the principal arguments by which the truth upon the subject may be established, and of the leading principles applicable to the difficulties with which the doctrine we have embraced as true may be assailed; and then to seek to make a right and judicious application of it, according to its true nature, tendency, and bearing, without allowing ourselves to be dragged into endless and unprofitable speculations, in regard to its deeper mysteries or more intricate perplexities, or to be harassed by perpetual doubt and difficulty.

The same cause which has produced the result of there being really just two opposite alternatives on this important subject, and of the consequent necessity of all men who study it, taking either the Calvinistic or the Arminian side in the controversy, has also produced the result, that Calvinists and Arminians have not differed very materially among themselves, respectively, as to the substance of what they held and taught upon the subject. I have referred to the many attempts that have been made to devise new solutions of the difficulties attaching to the opposite theories; but these have not, in general, affected the mode of stating and expounding the theories themselves. The same ingenuity has been often exerted in trying to devise new arguments, or to put the old arguments in a new and more satisfactory light; but, so far from affecting the state of the question, these attempts have scarcely ever produced any substantial variety, even in the arguments themselves.

The Socinians generally, upon this subject, agree with the Arminians,—that is, they agree with them in rejecting the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. While, however, these two parties agree with each other, in what they hold and teach upon the subject, there is one important point, in the mode in which they conduct the argument against Calvinism, where there is a difference, which it may be worth while to notice. The Socinians, as we formerly had occasion to explain, deny that God does or can foresee, certainly and infallibly, future contingent events,—such as the future actions of men, dependent upon their volitions; and I formerly had occasion to mention the curious and interesting fact, that some of them have been bold enough, and honest enough, to acknowledge, that the reason which induced them to deny God's certain foreknowledge of the future actions of men, was, that if this were admitted, it was impossible to disprove, or to refuse to concede, the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. The Arminians have not, in general, denied God's certain foreknowledge of all future events, though some of them have made it very manifest,—as I may, perhaps, afterwards show,—that they would very willingly deny it if they could; but, not denying it, they have, in consequence, been obliged to try to show, though without success, that this admission is not fatal, as Socinians acknowledge it to be, to anti-Calvinistic views upon the subject of predestination; while the Socinians, with greater boldness and consistency, cut the knot which they felt themselves unable to untie. These differences, however, do not affect the substance of what is maintained on either side of the question; and, accordingly, we concede to the anti-Calvinists, that they are all, in the main, of one mind as to the substance of what they teach upon the subject of predestination, though they differ considerably as to the arguments by which their doctrine should be defended. Indeed, we reckon it a point of some importance, to make it palpable, that there is really but one alternative to Calvinism,—one doctrine that can be held upon this subject, if that of the Calvinists be denied. But they scarcely make the same concession to us; at least, they usually endeavour to excite a prejudice against Calvinism, by dwelling much upon, and exaggerating, a difference connected with this matter, that has been discussed, and occasionally with some keenness, among Calvinists themselves. I allude to the dispute between the Supralapsarians and the Sublapsarians.



There have been two or three eminent Calvinists, especially among the supralapsarians, who have contended with considerable earnestness upon this subject, as if it were a vital point,—particularly Gomarus, the colleague and opponent of Arminius; and Twisse, the prolocutor or president of the Westminster Assembly; but Calvinists, in general, have not reckoned it a controversy of much importance. Indeed, it will be found that the subject is much more frequently spoken of by Arminians than by Calvinists, just because, as I have said, they usually endeavour to improve it, as a means of exciting a prejudice against Calvinism,—first, by representing it as an important difference subsisting among Calvinists, on which they are not able to come to an agreement; and, secondly, and more particularly, by giving prominence to the supralapsarian view, as if it were the truest and most consistent Calvinism,—this being the doctrine which is the more likely of the two to come into collision with men's natural feelings and impressions. I do not think it necessary to enter into any exposition or discussion of these topics, because, in truth, to give it much prominence, or to treat it as a matter of much importance, is just to give some countenance to what is merely a controversial artifice of our opponents. The state of the question upon this point is very clearly explained, and the sublapsarian view very ably defended, by Turretine, under the head, “De Prædestinationis objecto.”\* I will merely make a single remark, to explain what will be found in the writings of theologians upon the point. The question is usually put in this form: Whether the object or the subject—for, in this case, these two words are synonymous—of the decree of predestination, electing some and passing by others, be man unfallen, or man fallen—that is, whether God, in the act of electing some to life, and passing by others, contemplated men, or had them present to His mind, simply as rational and responsible beings, whom He was to create, or regarded them as fallen into a state of sin and misery, from which state He decreed to save some of them, and to abstain from saving the rest. Those who hold the former view are supralapsarians; and those who hold the latter are sublapsarians.

The difference between Calvinists upon this subject is not in itself of any material importance; and almost all judicious Cal-

\* Turretin. Loc. iv., Qu. ix.

vinists in modern times have thought it unnecessary, if not unwarrantable, to give any formal or explicit deliverance upon it; while they have usually adhered to the ordinary representations of Scripture upon the subject, which are *practically* sublapsarian. This is substantially the course adopted both in the canons of the Synod of Dort and in our own Confession; though there is, perhaps, less in our Confession that would be distasteful to a rigid supralapsarian, than in the canons of the Synod of Dort. Sublapsarians all admit that God unchangeably fore-ordained the fall of Adam, as well as everything else that comes to pass; while—in the words of our Confession—they deny that this principle can be proved to involve the conclusion, that “God is the author of sin; that violence is offered to the will of the creatures; or that the liberty or contingency of second causes is taken away.” And supralapsarians all admit that God’s eternal purposes were formed upon a full and certain knowledge of all things possible as well as actual,—that is, certainly future,—and in the exercise of all His perfections of wisdom and justice, and, more especially, that a respect to sin does come into consideration in predestination; or, as Turretine expresses it, settling the true state of the question upon this point, “in Prædestinatione rationem peccati in considerationem” venire . . . . “ut nemo damnetur nisi propter peccatum; et nemo salvetur, nisi qui miser fuerit et perditus.”\*

The fall of the human race into a state of sin and misery in Adam, is the basis and foundation of the scheme of truth revealed in the sacred Scripture,—it is the basis and foundation of the Calvinistic system of theology; and in the truths plainly revealed in Scripture as to the principles that determine and regulate the provision by which some men are saved from this their natural state of sin and misery, and the rest are left to perish in it, there are, without entering into unwarranted and presumptuous speculations, ample materials for enabling us to decide conclusively in favour of Calvinism, and against Arminianism, on all the points that are really involved in the controversy between them.†

If we are correct in this account of the state of the question concerning predestination as controverted between Calvinists and Arminians, it is evident that the real points in dispute are these:

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\* Turretin. Loc. iv., Qu. ix., sec. vii. | in “The Reformers and the Theology  
 † This topic is more fully illustrated | of the Reformation,” p. 358. (Edrs.)

Did God from eternity, in contemplating and arranging about the everlasting condition of mankind, choose some men out of the human race—that is, certain persons, individually and specifically—to be, certainly and infallibly, partakers of eternal life? or did He merely choose certain qualities or properties,—faith, repentance, holiness, and perseverance,—with a purpose of admitting to heaven all those men, whoever they might be, that should possess or exhibit these qualities, and to consign to punishment all those who, after being favoured with suitable opportunities, should fail to exhibit them? This question really, and in substance, exhausts the controversy; and the second of these positions must be maintained by all anti-Calvinists. But as the Arminian differs from the Socinian section of the anti-Calvinists, in admitting God's foreknowledge of all events,—and, of course, in admitting that God foresaw from eternity, and consequently had present to His mind, though He did not fore-ordain, what would, in fact, be the ultimate fate of each individual,—the controversy, as managed with Arminian opponents, has more commonly assumed this form: Was God's election of some men to everlasting life based or founded only on His mere free grace and love, or upon their faith, holiness, and perseverance, foreseen as future? This is the form in which the controversy is usually discussed with Arminians who admit God's foreknowledge of all events; but the question in this form does not at all differ in substance from the preceding, in which it applies equally to all anti-Calvinists, whether they admit or deny foreknowledge. Of course, an election founded upon a foresight of the faith, holiness, and perseverance of particular persons, is not an election at all, but a mere recognition of the future existence of certain qualities found in certain men, though God has neither produced, nor decreed to produce, them. Accordingly, Arminians are accustomed to identify the election of a particular individual with his faith or believing in Christ, as if there was no antecedent act of God bearing upon him—his character and condition—until he believed; while others of them—acting upon the same general idea, but following it out more consistently by taking into account their own doctrine, that faith is not necessarily connected with salvation, since believers may fall away and finally perish—identify the time of God's decree of election with the death of believers, as if then only their salvation became by the event certain, or certainly known, while till that

time nothing had been done to effect or secure it.\* But a more important question is, To what is it that men are chosen? is it merely what is external and temporary, and not to what is internal and everlasting?

It is common, in discussions upon this subject, to divide it into two leading branches,—the first comprehending the investigation of the object of election, or the discussion of the question, whether God, in election, chooses particular men, or merely general qualities; and the second comprehending the investigation of the *cause* of election, or the discussion of the question, whether God, in resolving to save some men, is influenced or determined by a foresight of their faith, holiness, or perseverance, or chooses them out of His mere good pleasure,—His free grace and love,—and resolves, *in consequence of having chosen them to salvation*, to give them faith, holiness, and perseverance. But, from the explanations already given, it is manifest that these two questions virtually resolve into one.

It has been common, also, in discussions upon this subject, to give the supposed *ipsissima verba* of God's decree of election upon the two opposite theories; and though this, perhaps, savours of presumption, as putting words into the mouth of God, it is fitted to bring out the difference between them in a clear and impressive light. Upon the Calvinistic theory, the decree of election, or that which God decrees or declares in regard to a particular individual, runs in this way: "I elect Peter,—or any particular individual, definitely and by name,—I elect Peter to everlasting life; and, in order that he may obtain everlasting life in the way appointed, I will give him faith and holiness, and secure that he shall persevere in them;" whereas, upon the Arminian theory, the decree of election must run in this way: "I elect to everlasting life all those men who shall believe and persevere. I foresee that Peter will believe and persevere, and therefore I elect him to everlasting life."

But we have said enough upon the state of the question, and must now proceed to make a few observations upon the leading grounds on which the Calvinistic doctrine has been established, and the objections by which it has been assailed.

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\* So the Remonstrants in their "Acta et Scripta Synodalia." Amesi Anti-synod. Script., p. 11.



*Sec. IX.—Predestination, and the Doctrine of the Fall.*

The evidence upon this, as upon most subjects of a similar kind, is usually divided into two branches: first, that derived from particular statements of Scripture which bear, or are alleged to bear, directly and immediately upon the precise point in dispute; and, secondly, that derived from general principles taught in Scripture, or other doctrines revealed there, from which the one or the other theory upon the subject of predestination may be alleged to follow by necessary logical sequence. It holds true, to a large extent, that the interpretation which men put upon particular statements of Scripture is, in point of fact, determined by the *general* conceptions they may have formed of the leading features of the scheme of divine truth. It is dangerous to indulge the habit of regulating our opinions upon divine truth chiefly in this way, without a careful and exact investigation of the precise meaning of particular statements of Scripture; for we are very apt to be mistaken in the views we form of the logical relations of different doctrines to each other, and to be led, in attempting to settle *this*, into presumptuous speculations in which we have no solid foundation to rest upon. Still, it cannot be disputed that there is a complete and harmonious scheme of doctrine revealed to us in Scripture,—that all its parts must be consistent with each other,—and that it is our duty to trace out this consistency, though we must be careful of making our distinct perception of the consistency of doctrines with each other the sole, or even the principal, test of their truth individually.

We shall first advert to the arguments in favour of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination derived from other principles or doctrines which are taught in Scripture, with which it seems to be connected, or from which it may be probably or certainly deduced.

And here we are naturally led to advert, in the first place, to the connection subsisting between the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination to eternal life, and the doctrine of the fall of the human race in Adam into an estate of sin and misery. With regard to this point, Calvinists generally admit that the fall of mankind, or of the whole human race, in Adam, is an essential part of their scheme of predestination, in this restricted sense; and that, unless this doctrine were true, their views upon the subject of predestination could not well be maintained, and would be destitute of

one of the foundations on which they rest. Our doctrine of predestination necessarily implies that men are all by nature, in point of fact, in a condition of guilt and depravity, from which they are unable to rescue themselves, and that God might, without injustice, have left them all in this condition to perish. It is this state of things, as a fact realized in the actual condition of men by nature, that lays a foundation for the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, or God's choosing some out of this condition, of His mere free grace and love, and determining to save them; and it is upon this ground—as evincing that all might justly have been left to perish, and that none had any claim upon God for deliverance and salvation—that we vindicate our doctrine from many of the objections by which it is commonly assailed, as if it represented God as exhibiting respect of persons, in any sense implying injustice, with reference to those whom He decreed to save, or as exhibiting injustice in any sense with reference to those whom He decreed to pass by, and to leave to perish. I do not at present enter into any exposition or defence of the doctrine of the fall of the human race in Adam,—of the grounds on which the universal guilt and depravity of men, as a matter of fact, is established,—or of the light, partial indeed, but still important, which Scripture casts upon this mysterious subject, by making known to us the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity. It is enough to remark, that Arminians never have disproved the Calvinistic doctrine of the universal guilt and depravity of mankind, and, of course, have no right to found upon a denial of this great fact an argument against the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. Could the universal guilt and depravity of mankind by nature, as a matter of fact, be conclusively disproved, this would, no doubt, occasion serious difficulty to Calvinists, in establishing and vindicating their doctrine of predestination; but then, on the other hand, the proof of this fact—which can be satisfactorily established both from Scripture and experience—not only leaves the doctrine of predestination unassailable from that quarter, but affords some positive evidence in support of it; for it is manifest that, if men are all by nature, in point of fact, involved in guilt or depravity,—if they are wholly unable to deliver themselves, and have no claim whatever upon God for deliverance,—then the deliverance and salvation of those of them who are delivered and saved must originate wholly in the good pleasure—in the free grace and love—of God, and must be

effected only by His almighty power,—principles which Arminians may profess to hold in words, but which are manifestly inconsistent with the whole substance and spirit of their theology, and which find their full and honest expression only in the doctrines of Calvinism.

*Sec. X.—Predestination, and the Omniscience of God.*

This naturally leads us to advert to the support which the Calvinistic doctrine derives from the scriptural representations of the divine perfections and sovereignty, as exercised in the government of the world. Calvinists have always contended that their doctrine of predestination is involved in, or clearly deducible from, the views which are presented, both by reason and revelation, concerning what are called the natural attributes of God,—His infinite power, knowledge, and wisdom,—and the supreme and sovereign dominion which He exercises, and must exercise, over all His creatures; and it is on this account that some of the fundamental principles bearing upon the subject of predestination are often discussed, in systems of theology, under the head “De Deo,” in giving an account of the divine attributes and perfections, and especially in considering the subject of God’s will,—that is, His power of volition,—the principles which regulate, and the results which flow from, its exercise. The substance of the argument is this,—that the Arminian system of theology, in several ways, ascribes to God what is inconsistent with His infinite perfections, and represents Him as acting and conducting His government of the world in a manner which cannot be reconciled with the full exercise of the attributes or perfections which He undoubtedly possesses; whereas the Calvinistic doctrine not only leaves full scope for the exercise of all His perfections in the government of the world, so as to be free from all objection on that ground, but may be directly and positively deduced from what we know concerning their nature and exercise. The two principal topics around which the discussion of the points involved in the investigation of this department has been gathered, are the divine omniscience and the divine sovereignty.

God knows all things possible and actual; and Arminians, as distinguished from Socinians, admit that God’s omniscience includes all the actions which men ever perform,—that is, that He

from eternity foresaw—and this not merely probably and conjecturally, but certainly and infallibly—every event that has occurred or will occur,—every action which men have performed or will perform; so that, from eternity, He could have infallibly predicted every one of them, as He has, in fact, predicted many, which have occurred just as He had foretold. Now, when we dwell upon this truth,—which Arminians concede,—and realize what is involved or implied in it, we can scarcely fail to see that it suggests considerations which disprove the Arminian, and establish the Calvinistic, doctrine of predestination. God's foreknowledge of all events, implies that they are fixed and certain; that, from some cause or other, it has already become a certain thing,—a thing determined and unalterable,—that they *shall* take place,—a proposition asserting that they shall come to pass being already, even from eternity, a true proposition. This is inconsistent with that *contingency* which the principles of the Arminians require them to ascribe to the actions of men. And it is to no purpose to allege, as they commonly do, that certainty is not a quality of the events themselves, but only of the mind contemplating them;\* for, even though this were conceded as a mere question of definition, or of exactness in the use of language, it would still hold true, that the certainty with which the divine mind contemplates them as future, affords good ground for *the inference* that they are not contingent or undetermined, so that it is just as possible that they may not take place as that they may; but that their future occurrence is already—that is, from eternity—a fixed and settled thing; and if so, nothing can have fixed or settled this, except the good pleasure of God,—the great First Cause,—freely and unchangeably fore-ordaining whatsoever comes to pass.† So much for the bearing of God's certain foreknowledge of all future events upon the character and causes of the events themselves.

But there is another question which has been broached upon this subject,—namely, How could God foresee all future events, except on the ground of His having fore-ordained them, or decreed to bring them to pass? The question may seem a pre-

\* Copleston's "Enquiry into the Doctrines of Necessity and Predestination," Preface, and Discourse iii.

† Edwards on the Freedom of the

Will, P. ii., sec. xii., quoted by Copleston, Dis. i., pp. 39, 40. Edwards' Remarks on important Theological Controversies, c. iii., secs. vi., xvii.



sumptuous one : for it must be admitted, that, in order to derive an argument in favour of Calvinism from this consideration, we must assert, that it is not possible that God could have certainly foreseen all future events, unless He had fore-ordained them ; and it is not commonly warrantable or safe to indulge in dogmatic assertions, as to what was, or was not, possible to God, unless we have His own explicit declaration to this effect,—as we have in Scripture in some instances,—to authorize the assertion. Still this consideration is not altogether destitute of weight, as an argument in favour of Calvinism. We are fully warranted in saying, that we are utterly unable to form any conception of the possibility of God's foreseeing certainly future events, unless He had already—that is, previously in the order of nature, though, of course, not of time—fore-ordained them. And, in saying this, we have the support of the Socinian section of our opponents, who have conceded, as I formerly noticed, that if the infallible foreknowledge of all future events be admitted, the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination cannot be refuted ; and who were accustomed, when pressed with the proof that God had foretold certain particular actions of men, to take refuge in the position, *that, if so*, He must have fore-ordained these particular actions, and was *thus* enabled to predict them ; while they denied that this holds true of future actions in general. We are not, indeed, entitled to make our inability to conceive *how* God could have foreseen all events without having fore-ordained them, a proof of the impossibility of His having done so ; but still this inability is entitled to some weight in the absence of any conclusive evidence on the other side ; and this use, at least, we are fully warranted to make of it,—namely, that we may fairly regard it as neutralizing or counterbalancing the leading objection against the Calvinistic scheme, derived from the alleged impossibility of conceiving *how* God could fore-ordain whatsoever comes to pass, and yet man be responsible for his actions. There is just as much difficulty in conceiving how God could have foreknown all events unless He fore-ordained them, as in conceiving how man can be responsible for his actions, unless God has *not* fore-ordained them ; and the one difficulty may be fairly set over against the other.

Arminians, in dealing with the arguments in favour of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, derived from God's omni-

science, are accustomed to enlarge upon the difference between foreknowledge and fore-ordination, to show that the knowledge which another being may possess that we will perform certain actions, does not interfere with our freedom or exert any influence or efficiency in bringing these actions to pass; while fore-ordination does. Now, this mode of arguing does not really touch the point at present in dispute. It may affect the question, how far God's fore-ordination of all events exempts men from the responsibility of their sins, and involves Him in it; but it does not touch the argument by which, from foreknowledge, *we infer* fore-ordination;\* and that is the only point with which we have at present to do. The mere knowledge which another being may possess, that I shall perform certain actions, will not of itself exert any influence upon the production of these actions; but it may, notwithstanding, afford *a satisfactory proof, in the way of inference*, that these actions, yet future, are fixed and determined; that provision has been made, in some way or other, for effecting that they shall take place; and that, with this provision, *whatever it may be*, the foreknowledge of them, *when traced back to its original source*, must be inseparably connected. There is no fair analogy—though this is really the leading argument of Arminians upon the subject—between the foreknowledge that may have been communicated to the mind of another being of my future actions, and that foreknowledge of them, existing in the divine mind, from which all certain foreknowledge of them must have been derived. The certain foreknowledge of future events belongs, originally and inherently, only to God, and must be communicated by Him to any other beings who possess it. He may have communicated the knowledge of some future actions of men to an angel, and the angel may have communicated it to one of the prophets. At neither of these stages, in the transmission, is there anything to exert any influence upon the production of the result; but still the certainty of the knowledge communicated and possessed, affords good ground for the inference, that the events must have been fixed and determined. And when we trace this knowledge up to its ultimate source, in the divine mind, and contemplate it as existing there

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\* The unsatisfactoriness of this answer is virtually admitted by Archbishop Whately. Essays on Difficul- ties in St Paul's Writings, Ess. iii., sec. 4., pp. 141-2, 5th ed., 1845.

from all eternity, we are constrained, while we still draw the same inference as before,—namely, that the foreknowledge affords proof that the events were fixed and settled,—to ascribe the determination of them, or the provision securing that they shall take place, to the only existing and adequate cause,—namely, the eternal purpose of God, according to the counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably fore-ordaining whatsoever is to come to pass.

The doctrine of God's omniscience has been employed by Calvinists, not only as affording a direct and positive proof or evidence of His having fore-ordained all events, but also as affording a satisfactory answer to some of the objections which are adduced by Arminians against the doctrine. There are not a few of the arguments which Arminians adduce, both from reason and Scripture, against the doctrine of predestination, founded on facts or statements alleged to be inconsistent with its truth, and therefore disproving it, with respect to which it is easy to show that, *if valid*, they would equally disprove God's having foreseen all events. And when this can be established, then the right conclusion is, that, as they prove too much, they prove nothing. I will not enlarge upon this point, but content myself with simply mentioning it, as one important topic to be attended to in the study of this controversy.

After this explanation of the way and manner in which the doctrine of God's omniscience bears upon the controversy between Calvinists and Arminians on the subject of predestination, we need not be surprised at a statement I formerly made,—namely, that while Arminians, in general, have not ventured to follow the Socinians, in denying that God foresees all future events, some of them have made it manifest that they would very willingly deny the divine foreknowledge, if they could, or dared. As this is an important fact in the history of theological discussion, and well fitted to afford instruction and warning, it may be proper to refer to some of the evidences on which it rests. Arminius himself maintained,—as the sounder portion of those who have been called after his name have generally done,—that God certainly foresees all future events, and that the election of individuals to life was founded upon this foresight. But his followers soon found that this admission of the divine foreknowledge involved them in difficulties, from which they could not extricate them-

selves; and they, in consequence, began to omit it altogether in their exposition of their views, and then to talk doubtfully, first of its importance, and then of its truth. In their "Acta et Scripta Synodalia," published in 1620, they omit all reference to God's foreknowledge, and declare it to be their opinion, that the object of election to glory, is all those men, and those only, who, by divine assistance, believe in Christ, and persevere and die in true faith,\* —just as if God Himself did not know certainly whether a particular individual would be saved until He actually saw the termination of his life. They followed the same course in the Confession written by Episcopius, but published in 1622 in the name of the whole body; and when they were challenged for this, in an answer to the Confession, written by the professors of theology at Leyden, entitled "Censura in Confessionem," and called upon to declare their sentiments openly upon this important subject, they, in their "Apologia pro Confessione," in reply to the Censure,—a work written also by Episcopius, in the name of them all,—evaded the demand, and refused to make any declaration of their sentiments† upon the subject, attempting to escape by a sophistical, quibbling retort upon their opponents. Episcopius and Limborch, in their own works, have both spoken doubtfully or disparagingly of the doctrine of the divine foreknowledge, and have intimated that, in their opinion, it was not of much importance whether men believed it or not. Nay, they almost, in so many words, admit that they have been obliged to concede reluctantly the truth of this doctrine; because they have not been able to devise any plausible mode of evading or disposing of the fact, that the Scripture contains predictions of the future actions of free responsible beings. And Curcellæus has gone so far as to tell us plainly, that men had much better reject foreknowledge than admit fore-ordination. His words are: "Non dubitabo hic asserere, minus illum in Deum esse injurium, qui futurorum contingentium Præscientiam ipsi prorsus adimit; quam qui statuit Deum, ut illa certo præscire possit, in alterutram partem decreto suo prius determinare."‡

\* Act. et Script. Synod., P. ii., p. 5; Amesii Anti-synodalia Scripta, p. 11.

† Censura in Confessionem, c. ii., sec. viii., p. 39; Apologia, pp. 43-4;

Amesii Anti-synodalia Scripta, pp. 14-16; Limborch's Theologia Christiana, Lib. ii., c. viii., sec. xxvii.

‡ "Institutio," Lib. ii., c. vii., p. 53.



Some Arminian divines have indicated the same leaning and tendency,—though in a somewhat different form,—by suggesting that God's omniscience may imply merely that He *can* know all things, *if He chooses*,—just as His omnipotence implies that He *can do* all things, *if He chooses*. This notion has been advocated even by some of the more evangelical Arminians, such as the late celebrated Wesleyan commentator, Dr Adam Clarke; but it only shows that they feel the difficulty, without affording them any fair means of escape. There is no fair analogy between the omniscience and the omnipotence of God in this matter; for future events—that is, events which are certainly to be—are not merely *possible things*, but *actual realities*, though yet future; and, therefore, to ascribe to God actual ignorance of any of them, even though it is conceded that He might know them if He chose, is plainly and palpably to deny to Him the attribute of omniscience. And men who hold this notion would act a more consistent and creditable part, if they would at once avow the Socinian doctrine upon this subject; for *they*, too, admit that God can foreknow all future events if He chooses,—that is, by fore-ordaining them.

Another attempt has been made by Arminians to dispose of the arguments in favour of Calvinism, derived from the divine omniscience, and, indeed, from the divine attributes and perfections generally. It was fully expounded and applied by Archbishop King, in his celebrated sermon, entitled, “Divine Predestination and Foreknowledge consistent with the Freedom of Man's Will;” and it has been adopted by some of the most eminent anti-Calvinistic writers of the present day,—as Archbishop Whately and Bishop Copleston. It consists, substantially,—for I cannot enter into any detailed explanation of it,—in maintaining that we know too little about God, and the divine attributes and perfections, to warrant us in drawing conclusions from them as to the divine procedure,—that the divine attributes, though called by the same names, are not the same in kind as those which we ourselves possess, even while infinitely superior in degree; but that our knowledge of them is altogether analogical, and that we are not entitled to draw inferences or conclusions,—from the divine knowledge or wisdom, for instance,—as we would from the same qualities—that is, knowledge and wisdom—in men. We do not dispute that there is a large measure of truth in this general view of the subject; and it would have

been well if Arminians had acted somewhat more fully upon the practical lessons which it suggests. Their principal arguments against Calvinism have always been derived from its alleged inconsistency with the *moral* attributes of God,—His goodness, justice, and holiness; and if they are to be deprived, by a sounder philosophy upon this subject, of their arguments derived from these topics, they will have little else to say. The principle, in so far as it is sound and just, overturns the great body of the common Arminian objections against Calvinism; and Archbishop Whately candidly and consistently abandons, virtually, as unwarrantable and unphilosophical, the objections against Calvinism, on which Arminians have been accustomed to rest their chief confidence, derived from its alleged inconsistency with the moral perfections of God. The principle, however, does seem to be carried too far, when it is laid down so absolutely that our knowledge of God's attributes is wholly analogical, and does not warrant any inferences as to the mode of the divine procedure. The incomprehensibility of Jehovah,—the infinite distance between a finite and an infinite being,—should ever be fully recognised and acted on. But Scripture and right reason seem plainly enough to warrant the propriety and legitimacy of certain inferences or conclusions as to God's procedure, derived from the contemplation of His attributes,—especially from what are called His natural, as distinguished from His moral, attributes. The arguments in favour of Calvinism have been derived from His natural attributes,—His power and supremacy,—His knowledge and wisdom; while the objections against it have been commonly derived from His moral attributes,—His goodness, justice, and holiness. And there is one important distinction between these two classes of attributes, which furnishes a decided advantage to Calvinism, by showing that inferences as to the divine procedure, derived from the natural, *may* be more warrantable and certain than inferences derived from the moral, attributes of God. While we ought never to forget, that in all God does He acts in accordance with all the perfections of His nature; still, it is plain that His moral attributes—if each were fully carried out and operating alone—would lead to different and opposite modes of dealing with His creatures,—that while His goodness might prompt Him to confer happiness, His holiness and justice might prompt Him to inflict pain as punishment for sin. His mercy and compassion may be

exercised upon some sinners, and His holiness and justice upon others; so that we cannot, from His moral attributes merely, draw any certain conclusions as to whether He would save all sinners, or none, or some; and if some, upon what principles He would make the selection. God's moral attributes are manifested and exercised in purposing and in bringing to pass the ultimate destiny, both of those who are saved and of those who perish. The one class, to use the language of our Confession, "He predestinates to everlasting life,—to the praise of His glorious grace; the other class He passes by, and ordains to dishonour and wrath for their sin,—to the praise of His glorious justice."

Now, there is nothing analogous to this diversity, or *apparent* contrariety, in regard to God's natural attributes. No purpose, and no procedure, can be warrantably ascribed to God, which would imply any defect or limitation in His power, knowledge, or supremacy. There is nothing which we can fix upon and establish as limiting or modifying the exercise of these attributes. It is true, that God cannot exercise His power and supremacy in a way inconsistent with His moral perfections. But still, the distinction referred to shows that we may be proceeding upon much more uncertain and precarious grounds, when we assert that any particular mode of procedure, ascribed to God, is inconsistent with His infinite goodness, holiness, and justice, than when we assert that it is inconsistent with His infinite power, knowledge, wisdom, and sovereign supremacy. In short, I think it would be no difficult matter to show that we are fully warranted in accepting the virtual concession of Archbishop Whately, as to the precarious and uncertain character of the arguments against Calvinism, from its alleged inconsistency with God's moral attributes; while, at the same time, we are not bound to renounce the arguments in favour of Calvinism, and in opposition to Arminianism, derived from the consideration of God's natural attributes. This topic is one of considerable importance, and of extensive application, in its bearings, not only upon the direct and positive arguments in favour of Calvinism, but also upon the leading objections which Arminians have been accustomed to adduce against it.

*Sec. XI.—Predestination, and the Sovereignty of God.*

The leading scriptural doctrines concerning God which have been employed as furnishing arguments in favour of Calvinism,

are those of the divine omniscience and the divine sovereignty. The doctrine of the divine sovereignty may be regarded as comprehending the topics usually discussed under the heads of the divine will and the divine efficiency,—or the agency which God, in providence, exerts in determining men's character, actions, and destiny. That God is the supreme ruler and governor of the universe,—that, in the exercise and manifestation of His perfections, He directs and controls all events, all creatures, and all their actions,—is universally admitted; and we contend that this truth, when realized and applied, under the guidance of the information given us concerning it in Scripture, affords materials for establishing Calvinistic and for disproving Arminian views. In the general truth, universally admitted, that God is the great First Cause of all things,—the Creator and the constant Preserver of everything that exists,—the sovereign Ruler and Disposer of all events,—seems to be fairly involved this idea—that He must have formed a plan for regulating all things; and that in all that He is doing in providence, in the wide sense in which we formerly explained this word, or in the whole actual government of the world, and all the creatures it contains, He is just carrying into effect the plan which He had formed; and, if so, must be accomplishing His purposes, or executing His decrees, in all that is taking place,—in whatsoever cometh to pass. The general representations of Scripture describe God as ruling and directing all things according to the counsel of His own will; and this is fully accordant with the conceptions which we are constrained to form of the agency or government of a Being who is infinite in every perfection, and who is the First Cause and Supreme Disposer of all things.

In ascribing absolute supremacy or sovereignty to God in the disposal of all things, Calvinists do not mean, as their opponents commonly represent the matter, that He decrees and executes His decrees or purposes, and acts *arbitrarily*, or without reasons.\* They hold that, in everything which God purposes and does, He acts upon the best reasons, in the exercise of His own infinite wisdom, and of all His moral perfections; but they think that He purposes and acts on reasons which He has not thought proper to make known to us,—which are not level to our comprehension,—

\* Walæi Enchiridion Religionis Reformatæ, Opera, tom. i., p. 66. See also Walæi Loci Communes, Opera, tom. i., p. 332, where he gives quotations on this point from Calvin and Beza.



and which, therefore, we can resolve only into His own unsearchable perfections,—into the counsel of His own will; whereas Arminians virtually undertake to explain or account for all that God does in His dealings with men,—to assign the causes or reasons of His purposes and procedure. This, indeed, is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the two systems,—that the Arminians virtually deny God's sovereignty, by undertaking and professing to assign the reasons of all His dealings with men; while Calvinists resolve them, principally and ultimately, into the counsel of His own will,—a view which seems much more accordant with scriptural representations of His perfections, of the relation in which He stands to His creatures, and of the supremacy which He exercises over them. The sovereignty ascribed to God in Scripture, and involved in all worthy conceptions of Him, seems plainly to imply that His purposes, volitions, and acts, must be ascribed ultimately to the essential perfections of His own nature; while it also seems to imply that His purposes and volitions must be, in some sense, the causes or sources of all that takes place in His administration of the affairs of the world; and, if these principles be well founded, they plainly afford clear and certain grounds for conclusions which form the sum and substance of Calvinistic theology,—namely, that God, according to the counsel of His own will, hath fore-ordained whatsoever cometh to pass, and hath predetermined the everlasting destiny of all His creatures.

There have been very long and intricate discussions upon the subject of the will of God,—*voluntas Dei*,—His power of volition, including His actual volitions, and the principles by which they are regulated; and the investigation of this subject forms an essential part of the argument in the controversy between Calvinists and Arminians. It is, of course, universally admitted, that God has revealed to men a law for the regulation of their character and conduct,—that this law indicates and expresses the divine will as to what they should be and do, and unfolds what will, in point of fact, be the consequences, upon their fate and ultimate destiny, of compliance or non-compliance with the divine will thus revealed to them. On this point—on all that is involved in these positions—there is no dispute. But, in the great truth that God rules and governs the world, exercising supreme dominion over all the actions and concerns of men, there is plainly involved this general idea,—that events, the things which are actually taking

place, are also, *in some sense*, the results, the expressions, the indications, of the divine will, or of what God desires and purposes should exist or take place. It is admitted that everything that takes place,—including all the actions which men perform, and, of course, including their ultimate fate or destiny,—was foreseen by God; and that His providence is, in some way or other, concerned in the ordering of all events. It cannot be disputed, without denying God's omnipotence, that He could have prevented the occurrence of anything, or everything, that has taken place, or will yet take place, if He had so chosen,—if *this* had been His will or pleasure; and, therefore, everything that cometh to pass,—including the actions and the ultimate destiny of men,—must be, in some sense, in accordance with His will,—with what He has desired and purposed. The question of Augustine is unanswerable: “*Quis porro tam impiè desipiat, ut dicat Deum malas hominum voluntates quas voluerit, quando voluerit, ubi voluerit, in bonum non posse convertere?*”<sup>\*</sup> Many of the events that take place,—such as the sinful actions of men,—are opposed to, or inconsistent with, His will as revealed in His law, which is an undoubted indication of what He wished or desired that men should do. Here, therefore, there is a difficulty,—an apparent contrariety of wills in God; and, of course, either one or other of these things,—namely, the law and event must be held not to indicate the will of God; or else, some distinctions must be introduced, by which the whole of what is true, and is proved, upon this subject, may be expressed.

It is unquestionable that the law is an expression of the divine will, and indicates that, in some sense, God wishes, as He commands and enjoins, that all His rational creatures should ever walk in the ways of holiness; and that all men, doing so, should be for ever blessed. Arminians virtually contend that this is the *only* true and real indication of the mind and will of God, and that actual events, simply as such, are not to be regarded as expressing, in any sense, the divine will,—indicating at all what God wished or desired,—what He purposed or has effected; while Calvinists contend that events, simply as such,—and, of course, all events,—do, as well as His law, in some sense express or indicate God's will; and hold this position to be certainly involved in the doctrine of the supreme dominion, which He exercises over all the

<sup>\*</sup> Augustini Enchiridion, c. 98. Opera, tom. vi., p. 170. Edit. Benedict.

actions and concerns of men ; and in the obvious and undeniable consideration, that He *could* have prevented the occurrence of everything that has occurred, or will occur, *and would have done so*, if it had not been, in some sense, accordant with His will, and fitted to accomplish His purposes,—that He *could*, if He had thought proper, have prevented the sin and the final destruction of all His rational creatures. As the Arminians do not regard the events that take place—the actions which are performed, viewed simply as such—as at all indicating or expressing *any* will of God, they are, of course, obliged to admit that many things come to pass—such as men’s sinful actions—which are altogether, and in every sense, opposed to God’s will. And as this statement, nakedly put, seems scarcely consistent with God’s omnipotence and supremacy, they are obliged, as well as the Calvinists, to introduce some distinctions into the exposition of this subject. The controversy upon this point really resolves very much into this general question,—whether the Calvinistic or the Arminian distinctions, or sets of distinctions, on the subject of the will of God, are the more accordant with right views of the divine perfections and character, as they are revealed to us in Scripture.

The distinctions which the Calvinists commonly employ in expounding and discussing this subject are chiefly these : They say there is a *voluntas decreti* and a *voluntas precepti*, or a will of decree, and a will of precept or command, or a secret and a revealed will ; and these two wills they call by a variety of names, all of them suggested by something that is said or indicated upon the subject in Scripture. God’s will of decree, or His secret will, they call also His *voluntas εὐδοκίας*, and *voluntas beneplaciti* ; while His will of precept, His revealed will, they call also His *voluntas εὐαρεστίας*, and *voluntas signi*. Now, these terms are really nothing more than just descriptions of what may be called matters of fact, as they are set before us in Scripture. There is a will of God regulating or determining events or actions, and indicated by the events which take place,—the actions which are performed. To deny this, is just to exclude God from the government of the world,—to assert that events take place which He does not direct and control, and which are altogether, and in every sense, inconsistent with, or opposed to, His will, or at least wholly uninfluenced by it. This, His will of decree, determining events, is secret, because utterly unknown to us *until* the event occurs, and thereby declares

it. Every event that does occur reveals to us something concerning the will of God,—that is, concerning what God had purposed,—had resolved to bring to pass, or at least to permit,—of which we were previously ignorant. There is nothing in these distinctions, the *voluntas decreti*, *arcana*, *εὐδοκίας*, *beneplaciti* (all these four expressions being, according to the *usus loquendi* that prevails among Calvinistic divines, descriptions, or just different designations, of one and the same thing,—namely, of the will by which God determines events or results), and the *voluntas præcepti*, *revelata*, *εὐαρεστίας*, and *signi* (these four contrasting respectively with the preceding, and being all likewise descriptive of one and the same thing,—namely, of the will by which He determines duties);—there is nothing in these two sets of distinctions but just the embodying in language,—technical, indeed, to some extent, but still suggested and sanctioned by Scripture,—of two doctrines, both of which we are constrained to admit. In no other way could we bring out, and express, the whole of what Scripture warrants us to believe upon this subject; because, as has been said, the only alternative is, to maintain that the events which take place,—including the actions and the ultimate fate of men,—are *in no sense* indications of the divine will; in other words, have been brought about altogether independently of God, and of His agency. That there are difficulties in the exposition of the matter,—difficulties which we cannot fully solve,—is not disputed; but this affords no sufficient ground for rejecting, or refusing to admit, whatever is fully sanctioned by the sacred Scriptures, and confirmed by the plain dictates of reason.

There are no such difficulties attaching to the Calvinistic, as to the Arminian, doctrines upon this subject. Not only is their general position,—that events or results, simply as such, are not, in any sense, expressions or indications of the will of God,—plainly inconsistent with right views of the Divine omnipotence and supremacy; but, in the prosecution of the subject, they need to have recourse to distinctions which still further manifest the inconsistency of their whole system with right views of the divine perfections and government. The great distinction which they propose and urge upon this subject, is that between the *antecedent* and the *consequent* will of God; or, what is virtually the same thing, the inefficacious or conditional, and the efficacious or absolute, will of God. These distinctions they commonly apply, not so much



to the purposes and decrees of God in general, and in all their extent, in their bearing upon whatsoever comes to pass, but only to the ultimate fate or destiny of men. They ascribe to God an *antecedent* will to save all men, and a *consequent* will,—a will or purpose consequent upon, and conditioned, by their conduct, actual or foreseen,—to save those, and those only, who believe and persevere, and to consign to misery those who continue in impenitence and unbelief. This antecedent will is, of course, not absolute, but conditional,—not efficacious, but inefficacious. And thus they represent God as willing what never takes place, and what, therefore, He must be either unable or unwilling to effect. To say that He is unable to effect it, is to deny His omnipotence and supremacy. To say that He is unwilling to effect it, is to contradict themselves, or to ascribe to God two opposite and contrary wills,—one of which takes effect, or is followed by the result willed, and the other is not. To ascribe to God a conditional will of saving all men, while yet many perish, is to represent Him as willing what He knows will never take place,—as suspending His own purposes and plans upon the volitions and actions of creatures who live and move and have their being in Him,—as wholly dependent on them for the attainment of what He is desirous to accomplish; and all this, surely, is plainly inconsistent with what we are taught to believe concerning the divine perfections and government,—the relation in which God stands to His creatures, and the supremacy which He exercises over them.\*

If God's decrees or purposes concerning the salvation of individual men, are founded—as Arminians teach—solely upon the foresight of their faith and perseverance, this represents Him as wholly dependent upon them for the formation of His plans and purposes; while it leaves the whole series of events that constitute the moral history of the world, and, in some sense, determine men's everlasting destiny, wholly unexplained or unaccounted for,—entirely unregulated or uncontrolled by God. The highest, and, indeed, the only, function ascribed to Him with respect to men's actions and fate, is that simply of foreseeing them. He does this, and He does nothing more. What it was that settled or determined their futurity,—or their being to be,—is left wholly unexplained by the Arminians; while Calvinists contend that this

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\* Turretin. Loc. iii., Qu. xv. and xvi.

must be ascribed to the will of God, exercised in accordance with all the perfections of His nature. Their specific character, with their consequent results, in their bearing upon men's eternal destiny, is really determined by men themselves; for, while Arminians do not dispute that God's providence and grace are, somehow, exercised in connection with the production of men's actions, they deny that He exercises any certainly efficacious or determining influence in the production of any of them. Whatever God does, in time, in the administration of the government of the world, He purposed or resolved to do from eternity. Arminians can scarcely deny this position; but then the admission of it only makes them more determined to limit the extent and efficacy of His agency in the production of events or results, and to withhold from Him any *determining* influence in the production even of good characters and good actions. Calvinists apply the principle of God's having decreed from eternity to do all that He actually does in time, in this way. The production of all that is spiritually good in men,—the production of faith and regeneration,—are represented in Scripture as the work of God; they are ascribed to His efficacious and determining agency. Faith and regeneration are inseparably connected, according to God's arrangements, in each case, with salvation. If the general principle above stated be true, then it follows, that whenever God produces faith and regeneration, He is doing in time what He purposed from eternity to do; and He is doing it in order to effect what He must also have resolved from eternity to effect,—namely, the everlasting salvation of some men,—that is, of all to whom He gives faith and regeneration. Hence, it will be seen how important, in this whole controversy, is the subject of the certain or determining efficacy of divine grace in the production of faith and regeneration; and how essentially the whole Arminian cause is bound up with the ascription of *such* a self-determining power to the human will, as excludes the certain and unfrustrable efficacy of God's grace in renovating and controlling it. The production of faith and regeneration is a work of God, wrought by Him on some men and not on others,—wrought upon them in accordance, indeed, with the whole principles of their mental constitution, but still wrought certainly and infallibly, whenever the power that is necessary for the production of it—without the exercise of which it could not be effected—is actually put forth.

If this be the agency by which faith and regeneration are in each case produced,—if the production of them is, in this sense, to be ascribed to God,—then He must have decreed or purposed from eternity to produce them, whenever they are produced; and, of course, to effect the ultimate and permanent results with which their existence stands inseparably connected,—namely, deliverance from guilt, and everlasting happiness. Were the production of faith and regeneration left dependent, in each case, upon the exercise of men's own free will,—that being made the turning-point,—and divine grace merely assisting or co-operating, but not *certainly determining* the result, then it is possible, so far as this department of the argument is concerned, that God might, indeed, have decreed from eternity what He would do in the matter, but still might, so far as concerned the actual production of the result, merely foresee what each man would do in improving the grace given him, and might be wholly regulated by this mere foresight in anything He might purpose with respect to men's ultimate fate. Whereas, if God produces faith and regeneration,—if it be, indeed, His agency that *determines* and *secures* their existence wherever they come to exist,—then, upon the general principle, that God resolved to do from eternity whatever He does in time, we are shut up to the conclusion, that He chose some men to faith and regeneration,—that He did so in order that He might thereby save *them*,—and that thus both the faith and the salvation of those who believe and are saved, are to be ascribed wholly to the good pleasure of God, choosing them to be the subjects of His almighty grace and the heirs of eternal glory.

Results, or events, are, of course, expressions or indications of God's will, only in so far as He is concerned in the production of them. The general views taught, both by reason and Scripture, about God's perfections, supremacy, and providence, fully warrant us in believing that His agency is, in some way, concerned in the production of all events or results whatever, since it is certain that He could have prevented any of them from coming to pass if He had so chosen, and must, therefore, have decreed or purposed either to produce, or, at least, to permit them. God's agency is not employed in the same manner, and to the same extent, in the production of all events or results; and the fulness and clearness with which different events and results express or indicate the divine will, depend upon the kind and degree of the agency which

He exerts,—and, of course, purposed to exert,—in the ordering of them. This agency is not exerted in the same manner, or in the same degree, in the permission of the bad, as in the production of the good, actions of men. In the good actions of men, God's *voluntas decreti* and His *voluntas præcepti*—His secret and His revealed will—concur and combine; in their sinful actions they do not; and, therefore, these latter do not express or indicate the divine will in the same sense, or to the same extent, as the former. Still we cannot exclude even them wholly from the *voluntas decreti*, as they are comprehended in the general scheme of His providence,—as they are directed and overruled by Him for promoting His wise and holy purposes,—and as He must, at least, have decreed or resolved to permit them, since He could have prevented them if He had chosen.

Arminians base their main attempt to exclude or limit the application of these principles upon the grand peculiarity of free agency as attaching to rational and responsible beings. We formerly had occasion, in discussing the subject of the efficacy of grace, to advert to the considerations by which this line of argument was to be met,—namely, by showing the unreasonableness of the idea that God had created any class of beings who, by the constitution He had given them, should be placed absolutely beyond His control in anything affecting their conduct and fate; and by pointing out the impossibility of proving that anything which Calvinists ascribe to God's agency in ordering or determining men's actions, character, and destiny, necessarily implies a contravention or violation of anything attaching to man as man, or to will as will. And while this is the true state of the case in regard to God's agency in the production of men's actions generally, and the limitation which free-will is alleged to put upon the character and results of this agency, we have full and distinct *special* information given us in Scripture in regard to by far the most important department at once of God's agency and men's actions,—namely, the production and the exercise of faith and conversion, which are inseparably connected in each case with salvation; and this information clearly teaches us that God does not leave the production of faith and conversion to be dependent upon any mere powers or capacities of the human will, but produces them Himself, wherever they are produced, certainly and infallibly, by His own almighty power; and, of course, must, upon principles already



explained, have decreed or purposed from eternity to put forth in time this almighty power, wherever it is put forth, to effect the result which *it* alone is sufficient or adequate to effect, and to accomplish all the ultimate results with which the production of these effects stand inseparably connected. If this be so, then the further conclusion is unavoidable,—that, in regard to all those in whom God does not put forth this almighty power to produce faith and conversion, He had decreed, or purposed, from eternity, to pass by these men, and to leave them to perish in their natural state of guilt and depravity, to the praise of His glorious justice.

*Sec. XII.—Scripture Evidence for Predestination.*

We have illustrated some of the leading arguments in favour of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, derived from other principles and doctrines, which are taught at once by Scripture and reason, and which either actually involve or include this doctrine, or can be shown to lead to it by necessary consequence,—especially the doctrines of God's omniscience, including His foreknowledge of all future events, and of His sovereignty or supremacy, or of His right to regulate, and His actually regulating, all things according to the counsel of His own will; more particularly as exhibited in the bestowal of the almighty or infallibly efficacious grace, by which faith and regeneration—the inseparable accompaniments of salvation—are produced in some men, to the preterition or exclusion of others. These great doctrines of the divine omniscience and the divine sovereignty are taught by natural as well as by revealed religion; and if it be indeed true, as we have endeavoured to prove, that they afford sufficient materials for establishing the doctrines that God has fore-ordained whatsoever cometh to pass, and that He determines the everlasting destinies of all His creatures, then must the Calvinistic scheme of theology not only be consistent with, but be required by, all worthy and accurate conceptions which, from any source, we are able to form concerning the divine perfections and supremacy. There are other principles or doctrines clearly revealed in Scripture, that afford satisfactory evidence in support of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination,—principles and doctrines connected with topics which are matters of pure revelation, as entering more immediately into the character and provisions of the scheme which God has devised and exe-

cuted for the salvation of sinners, for delivering men from their natural state of guilt and depravity, and preparing them for the enjoyment of eternal blessedness. This general head may be said to comprehend all indications given us in Scripture of God's having a peculiar or chosen people, as distinguished from the mass of the human race,—of His having given His Son to be the Redeemer and the Head of a chosen or select company from among men,—of His having given some men to Christ in covenant as the objects of His peculiar care and kindness,—and of the way and manner in which all this is connected, in point of fact, with the ultimate salvation of those who are saved.

Everything which is either asserted or indicated in Scripture concerning the end for which Christ was sent into the world, and the purposes which His humiliation, sufferings, and death were intended to effect, and do effect, in connection with the fall and the salvation, the ruin and the recovery, of men, is in fullest harmony with the principle that God has, out of His mere good pleasure, elected some men to eternal life, and has unchangeably determined to save *these men* with an everlasting salvation, and is, indeed, consistent or reconcilable with no other doctrine upon this subject. The general tenor of Scripture statement upon all these topics can be reconciled with no scheme of doctrine which does not imply that God from eternity selected some men to salvation, without anything of superior worth foreseen in them, as a condition or cause moving Him thereunto,—that this choice or election is the origin or source of everything in them which conduces or contributes to their salvation,—and implies that effectual provision has been made for securing that result. In short, all that is stated in Scripture concerning the lost and ruined condition of men by nature, and the provision made for their deliverance and salvation,—all that is declared or indicated there concerning the divine purpose or design with respect to ruined men,—the object or end of the vicarious work of the Son,—the efficacious agency of the Spirit in producing faith and conversion, holiness and perseverance,—is perfectly harmonious, and, when combined together, just constitutes the Calvinistic scheme of theology,—of God's electing some men to salvation of His own good pleasure,—giving them to Christ to be redeemed by Him,—sending forth His Spirit to apply to them the blessings which Christ purchased for them,—and thus securing that they shall

enjoy eternal blessedness, to the praise of the glory of His grace. This is the only scheme of doctrine that is really consistent with itself, and the only one that can be really reconciled with the fundamental principles that most thoroughly pervade the whole word of God with respect to the natural condition and capacities of men, and the grace and agency of God as exhibited in the salvation of those of them who are saved.

But I need not dwell longer upon the support which the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination derives from the great general principles, or from other particular doctrines, taught in Scripture concerning God's perfections and supremacy, and the leading provisions and arrangements of the scheme of salvation,—of the covenant of grace; and will now proceed, according to the division formerly intimated, to make a few observations upon the way in which the scriptural evidence of this doctrine has been discussed, in the more limited sense of the words, as including the investigation of the meaning of those scriptural statements that bear more directly and immediately upon the precise point in dispute. I do not mean to expound the evidence, or to unfold it, but merely to suggest some such observations concerning it as may be fitted to assist in the study of the subject.

Though the subject, as thus defined and limited, may be supposed to include only those scriptural statements which speak directly and immediately of predestination, or election to grace and glory, yet it is important to remember that any scriptural statements which contain plain indications of a limitation or specialty in the destination of Christ's death as to its personal objects, and of a limitation or specialty in the actual exercise or forth-putting of that gracious agency which is necessary to the production of faith and regeneration, may be regarded as bearing *directly*, rather than in the way of inference or implication, upon the truth of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. The connection between the doctrines of absolute personal election to life—particular redemption—and special distinguishing efficacious grace in conversion, is so clear and so close, as scarcely to leave any room for inference or argumentation. They are, indeed, rather parts of one great doctrine; and the proof of the truth of any one of them directly and necessarily establishes the truth of the rest. The Arminian scheme,—that is, in its more Pelagian, as distinguished from its more evangelical, form,—may be admitted to be equally consistent

with itself in these points, though consistent only in denying the whole of the fundamental principles taught in Scripture with respect to the method of salvation. And, accordingly, the old Arminians were accustomed to find their chief scriptural arguments against the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination upon the proof they professed to produce from the word of God, that Christ died for all men,—that is, *pro omnibus et singulis*,—and that God gives to all men, or at least to all to whom the gospel is preached, grace sufficient to enable them to repent and believe. There is not the same consistency or harmony in the representation of the scheme of Christian doctrine given by some of the more evangelical Arminians; for, by their views of the entire depravity of mankind, and of the nature of the work of the Spirit in the production of faith and regeneration, they make concessions which, if fully followed out, would land them in Calvinism. Neither is there full consistency in the views of those men who hold Calvinistic doctrines upon other points, but at the same time maintain the universality of the atonement; for their scheme of doctrine, as we formerly showed, amounts in substance to this,—that they at once assert and deny God's universal love to men, or His desire and purpose of saving all men,—assert it by maintaining the universality of the atonement, and deny it by maintaining the specialty of efficacious grace bestowed upon some men, in the execution of God's eternal purpose or decree. But while it is thus important to remember that scriptural statements, which establish the doctrine of particular redemption and of special distinguishing efficacious grace in conversion, may be said directly, and not merely in the way of inference, to prove the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, yet, as we have already considered these great doctrines, we intend now to confine our observations to the discussions which have been carried on with regard to the meaning and import of those scriptural statements which speak still more directly and immediately of predestination or election,—that is, the passages where the words *προγινώσκω, προορίζω, προτίθημι, προετοιμάζω, ἐκλέγω*, and their cognates, occur in connection with the character and the ultimate destiny of man.

That the different passages where these words occur do, in their natural and literal import, favour the Calvinistic doctrine, is too obvious to admit of dispute. I have had occasion to advert to the fact, that it is no uncommon thing now-a-days for German



rationalists,—differing in this from the older Socinians,—to concede plainly and distinctly that the apostles believed, and intended to teach, evangelical and Calvinistic doctrine, and that their statements, in accordance with the fair application of the principles and rules of philology and criticism, cannot admit of any other interpretation; while, of course, they do not consider themselves bound to believe these doctrines upon the authority of any apostle. An instance of this occurs in regard to the topic we are at present considering, which it may be worth while to mention. Wegscheider, late one of the professors of theology at Halle, in his “*Institutiones Theologiæ Christianæ Dogmaticæ*,”\* — usually esteemed the text-book of rationalistic theology,—admits that these words naturally and properly express a predestination or election of men by God to eternal happiness, and adds, “*nec nisi neglecto Scripturarum sacrarum usu loquendi aliæ significationes, mitiores quidem, illis subjici possunt.*” He ascribes the maintenance of this doctrine by the apostle to the erroneous notions of a crude and uncultivated age concerning divine efficiency, and to the Judaical particularism from which the apostles were not wholly delivered, and asserts that it is contradicted in other parts of Scripture; but this does not detract from the value of his testimony that the Apostle Paul believed and taught it, and that his words, critically investigated, do not admit of any other sense.

The passages which have been referred to seem plainly fitted to convey the ideas that God hath beforehand chosen, or made a selection of, some men from among the rest of men,—intending that these men, thus chosen or selected, should enjoy some peculiar privilege, and serve some special end or purpose. Even this general idea, indicated by the natural meaning of these words taken by themselves, is inconsistent with the Arminian doctrine, which, as we formerly explained, does not admit of a real election at all; and when it further appears, from the connection in which these words are employed,—first, that this predestination or election is not founded upon anything in the men chosen, as the cause or reason why God chooses them, but only on His own good pleasure; secondly, that it is a predestination or election of individuals, and not merely of bodies or masses of men; and, thirdly, that the choice or selection is directed to the object of effecting their

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\* Part iii., c. iii., § 145.

eternal salvation, and does certainly issue in that result;—then the Calvinistic doctrine upon the subject is fully established. Calvinists, of course, maintain that all these three positions can be established with regard to the election which God, in Scripture, is represented as making among men; while Arminians deny this. And on this point hinges most of the discussion that has taken place in regard to the meaning of those scriptural statements in which God's act in predestinating or electing is spoken of.

Now, with respect to the *first* of these positions,—namely, that the election ascribed to God is not founded upon anything in those chosen, as the cause or reason why He chooses them, but only on His own good pleasure,—this is so clearly and explicitly asserted in Scripture,—especially in the ninth chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans,—that the Arminians scarcely venture to dispute it. This statement may, at first sight, appear surprising. Knowing, as we do, that the founding of election upon a foresight of men's faith and perseverance is a prominent part of the Arminian scheme, as usually set forth, it might be supposed that, if they do not dispute *this* position, they are abandoning their whole cause. But the explanation lies here. When they maintain the position, that election is founded upon a foresight of faith and perseverance, they use the word election in a sense in some measure accommodated to that in which it is employed by their opponents, and not in the sense in which they themselves generally maintain that it is used in Scripture; and, by saying that it is founded upon a foresight of faith and perseverance, they virtually, as we have already explained, deny that it is election at all. The true and proper Arminian doctrine, as set forth by Arminius and his followers in opposition to Calvinism, is this,—that the *whole* of the decree of election,—meaning thereby the only thing that bears any resemblance to the general idea Calvinists have of a decree of election,—is God's general purpose to save all who shall believe and persevere, and to punish all who shall continue in impenitence and unbelief; so that, if there be anything which may be called an election of God to salvation, having reference to men individually, it can be founded only upon a foresight of men's faith and perseverance. Now, there is nothing in this necessarily inconsistent with conceding that there is an election of God spoken of in Scripture, which is founded only upon His own good pleasure, and not upon anything in the men chosen, so long as they maintain that this is not

the personal election to eternal life which the Calvinists contend for,—that is, so long as they deny one or other of the two remaining positions of the three formerly stated,—or, in other words, so long as they assert that the election of God which is spoken of in Scripture is not an election of individuals, but of nations or bodies of men; *or*, that it is not an election to faith and salvation, but merely to outward privileges, which men may improve or not as they choose.

It is true that, amid the confusion usually exhibited when men oppose truth, and are obliged to try to pervert the plain and obvious meaning of scriptural statements, some Arminians have tried to show, that even the election of God, described in the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, is not founded upon God's good pleasure, but upon something foreseen or existing in men themselves. But these have not been the most respectable or formidable advocates of error; and as the most plausible defenders of the Arminian scriptural argument concede this point, it is proper to explain where the main difficulty really lies, and what they can still maintain, notwithstanding this concession. Archbishop Whately, in his Essay upon Election, which is the third in his work entitled "Essays on some of the Difficulties in the Writings of St Paul," distinctly admits, that the word *elect*, as used in Scripture, "relates in most instances to an arbitrary, irrespective, unconditional decree;"\* and shows, that those Arminians who endeavour to answer the Calvinistic argument, founded upon the passages of Scripture where this word is used, *by denying this*, are not able to maintain the position they have assumed.

The two other positions which were mentioned, as necessary to be proved in order to establish from Scripture the Calvinistic argument, are,—first, that there is an election ascribed to God, which is a choice or selection of some men individually, and not of nations, or masses of men; and, secondly, that it is an election of these men to faith and salvation, and not merely to outward privileges. The Arminians deny that there is any such election spoken of in Scripture; and maintain that the only election ascribed to God is a choice,—either, first, of nations or bodies of men, and not of individuals; or, secondly, an election of men to the enjoy-

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\* Essays, pp. 135, 139 of fifth edition, 1845.

ment of outward privileges, or means of grace, and not to faith and salvation. Some Arminians prefer the one, and some the other, of these methods of answering the Calvinistic argument, and evading the testimony of Scripture; while others, again, think it best to employ both methods, according to the exigencies of the occasion. There is not, indeed, in substance, any very material difference between them; and it is a common practice of Arminians to employ the one or the other mode of evasion, according as the one or the other may seem to them to afford the more plausible materials, for turning aside the argument in favour of Calvinism, derived from the particular passage which they happen to be examining at the time. The ground taken by Dr Whately is, that the election ascribed to God in Scripture, which he admits to relate, in most instances, to an arbitrary, irrespective, unconditional decree, is not an election to faith and salvation; but only to external privileges or means of grace, which men may improve or not as they choose. Dr Sumner, Archbishop of Canterbury, in his work on Apostolical Preaching, takes the other ground, and maintains that it is an election, not of individuals, but of nations.\*

These questions, of course, can be decided only by a careful examination of the particular passages where the subject is spoken of, by an investigation of the exact meaning of the words, and of the context and scope of the passage. It is to be observed, in regard to this subject in general, that Calvinists do not need to maintain,—and do not, in fact, maintain,—that wherever an election of God is spoken of in Scripture, it is an election of individuals, and an election of individuals to faith and salvation,—or, that there is nothing said in Scripture of God's choosing nations, or of His choosing men to outward privileges, and to nothing more. God undoubtedly does choose nations, to bestow upon them some higher privileges, both in regard to temporal and spiritual matters, than He bestows upon others. The condition, both of nations and of individuals, with respect to outward privileges and the means of grace, is to be ascribed to God's sovereignty, to the counsel of His own will; and Calvinists do not dispute that this doctrine is taught in Scripture,—nay, they admit that it is the chief thing intended,

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\* Whately has pointed out this difference between his views and Dr Sumner's, in the Introduction to the fifth edition of his "Essays," pp. xxiii., xxiv.



in *some* of the passages, where God's election is spoken of. But they maintain these two positions, which, if made out, are quite sufficient to establish all that they contend for,—namely, first, that in some cases, where an election of nations, or an election to outward privileges, is spoken of, or at least is included, there is more implied than is expressly asserted; or that the argument, either in its own nature, or from the way in which it is conducted, affords sufficient grounds for the conclusion, that the inspired writer believed or assumed an election of individuals to faith and salvation;—and, secondly, and more particularly, that there are passages in which the election spoken of is not an election of nations, or an election to outward privileges, at all; but only, and exclusively, an election of individuals, and an election of individuals to sanctification and eternal life, or to grace and glory.

The principal passage to which the first of these positions has been applied by some Calvinists, though not by all, is the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. In this passage it is conceded by some, that one thing comprehended in the apostle's statements and arguments is an election of nations to outward privileges; while they also think it plain, from the whole scope of his statements, that he did not confine himself to this point,—that this was not the only thing he had in view,—and that, in his exposition of the subject of the rejection of the Jews as the peculiar people of God, and the admission of the Gentiles to all the privileges of the church, he makes statements, and lays down principles, which clearly involve the doctrine, that God chooses men to eternal life, according to the counsel of His own will. The principle of the divine sovereignty is manifested equally in both cases. There is an invariable connection established, in God's government of the world, between the enjoyment of outward privileges, or the means of grace, on the one hand, and faith and salvation on the other; in this sense, and to this extent, that the negation of the first implies the negation of the second. We are warranted, by the whole tenor of Scripture, in maintaining, that where God, in His sovereignty, withholds from men the enjoyment of the means of grace,—an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the only way of salvation,—He, at the same time, and by the same means, or ordination, withholds from them the opportunity and the power of believing and being saved. These two things are based upon the same general principle; and thus far are

directed to the same end. It is not, therefore, in the least to be wondered at, that the apostle, in discussing the one, should also introduce the other. The truth is, that no exposition could be given of God's procedure, in bestowing or withholding outward privileges, without also taking into account His procedure in enabling men to improve them; and the apostle, accordingly, in the discussion of this subject, has introduced a variety of statements, which cannot, without the greatest force and straining, be regarded as implying less than this, that, as God gives the means of grace to whom He will,—not from anything in them, as distinguishing them from others, but of his own good pleasure,—so He gives to whom He will, according to an election which He has made,—not on the ground of any worth of theirs, but of His own good pleasure,—the power or capacity of improving aright the means of grace, and of thereby attaining to salvation. The truth is, that, in the course of the discussion contained in this chapter, the apostle makes statements which far too plainly and explicitly assert the Calvinistic doctrine of the election of individuals to eternal life, to admit of their being evaded or turned aside by any vague or indefinite considerations derived from the general object for which the discussion is supposed to be introduced,—even though there was clearer evidence than there is, that his direct object in introducing it, was merely to explain the principles connected with the rejection of the Jews from outward privileges, and the admission of the Gentiles to the enjoyment of them. All this has been fully proved, by an examination of this important portion of Holy Writ; and nothing has yet been devised,—though much ingenuity has been wasted in attempting it,—that is likely to have much influence, in disproving it, upon men who are simply desirous to know the true meaning of God's statements, and are ready to submit their understandings and their hearts to whatever He has revealed.

The apostle, in this passage, not only makes it manifest, that he intended to assert the doctrine which is held by Calvinists, upon the subject of election; but, further, that he expected that his readers would understand his statements, just as Calvinists have always understood them, by the objections which he puts into their mouths,—assuming that, as a matter of course, they would at once allege, in opposition to what he had taught, that it represented God as unrighteous, and interfered with men's being

responsible, and justly blameable for their actions. These are just the objections which, at first view, spring up in men's minds, in opposition to the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination,—the very objections which, to this day, are constantly urged against it,—but which have not even a *prima facie* plausibility, as directed against the Arminian doctrine, of God's merely choosing men to outward privileges, and then leaving everything else connected with their ultimate destiny to depend upon the improvement which they choose to make of them. A doctrine which does not afford obvious and plausible grounds for these objections, cannot be that which the apostle taught; and this—were there nothing else—is sufficient to disprove the interpretation put upon the passage by our opponents. Arminians, indeed, profess to find an inscrutable mystery—such as might have suggested these objections—in the different degrees in which outward privileges are communicated by God to different nations and to different individuals. But, although they assert this, when pressed with the consideration, that the objections which the apostle intimates might be adduced against his doctrine implied that there was some inscrutable mystery attaching to it,—they really do not leave any mystery in the matter which there is any great difficulty in solving. There is no great mystery in the unequal distribution of outward privileges, unless there be an invariable connection between the possession of outward privileges and the actual attainment of salvation, at least in the sense formerly explained,—namely, that the negation of the first implies the negation of the second. If Arminians were to concede to us this connection, this would no doubt imply such a mystery as might naturally enough be supposed to suggest such objections as are mentioned by the apostle. But their general principles will not allow them to concede this; for they must maintain that, whatever differences there may be in men's outward privileges, all have means and opportunities sufficient to lead, when duly improved, to their salvation.

Accordingly, Limborch—after attempting to find, in the inequality of men's outward privileges, something that might naturally suggest these objections to men's minds, and warrant what the apostle himself says about the inscrutable mystery involved in the doctrine which he had been teaching—is obliged, in consistency, to introduce a limitation of this inequality and of its necessary results,—a limitation which really removes all appearance of

unrighteousness in God, and supersedes the necessity of appealing to the incomprehensibility of His judgments, by asserting of every man, that "*licet careat gratia salvifica*,"—by which he just means the knowledge of the gospel revelation,—"*non tamen illa gratiæ mensurâ destitutus est, quin si eâ recte utatur sensim in meliorem statum transferri possit, in quo ope gratiæ salutaris ad salutem pervenire queat.*"\* Arminians are unable to escape from inconsistency in treating of this subject. When they are dealing with the argument, that the condition of men who are left, in providence, without the knowledge of the gospel, and without the means of grace, virtually involves the principle of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, they labour to establish a distinction between the cases, and thus to evade the argument by denying a connection between the knowledge of the gospel and salvation, and try to explain the inequality by something in the conduct of men themselves, instead of resolving it into God's sovereignty; and have thus cut away the only plausible ground for maintaining that this inequality in the distribution of the means of grace is the inscrutable mystery of which the apostle speaks, as involved in his doctrine of election. Having laid the foundations of their whole scheme in grounds which exclude mystery, and make everything in the divine procedure perfectly comprehensible, they are unable to get up a mystery, even when they are compelled to make the attempt, in order to escape from the inferences which the apostle's statements so plainly sanction.

In short, Arminians must either adopt the Calvinistic principle of the invariable connection, negatively, between the enjoyment of the means of grace and the actual attainment of salvation, or else admit that there is no appearance of ground for adducing against their doctrine the objections which the apostle plainly intimates that *his* doctrine was sure to call forth; and in either case, their attempt to exclude the Calvinistic doctrine of the absolute election of individuals to faith and salvation, from the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, can be conclusively proved to be wholly unsuccessful.

Thus it appears that, even if we concede, as some Calvinists have done, that the more direct object of the apostle, in the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, is to unfold the principles

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\* Theol. Christ., Lib. iv., c. i., sec. xvi.



that regulate the rejection of the Jews from outward privileges, and the admission of the Gentiles to the enjoyment of them,—this is altogether insufficient to show that he has not here also plainly and fully asserted, as virtually identical in principle, the sovereignty of God in choosing some men, according to His mere good pleasure, to everlasting life, and in leaving the rest, not worse or more unworthy in themselves, to perish in their natural condition of guilt and depravity.

I shall now only again advert to the second position formerly mentioned, as maintained by Calvinists,—namely, that while there are passages in Scripture which refer to God's electing nations, and choosing men to the enjoyment of external privileges or means of grace, there are also many passages which there is no plausible pretence for evading in this way,—passages which plainly teach that God—uninfluenced by anything in men themselves, or by anything, so far as we know or can know, but the counsel of His own will—elects some men to faith and holiness, to perseverance in them and everlasting life, to be conformed to the image of His Son, and to share at length in His glory. These passages are to be found not only—as is sometimes alleged—in the writings of Paul, but in the discourses of our Saviour Himself, and in the writings of the Apostles Peter and John. It is our duty to be acquainted with them, and to be able to state and defend the grounds on which it can be shown, that, when carefully examined and correctly understood, they give the clear sanction of God's word to the doctrines which we profess to believe. The Calvinistic doctrine of election is stated in Scripture expressly and by plain implication,—formally and incidentally,—dogmatically and historically,—as a general truth, unfolding the principle that regulates God's dealings with men, and also as affording the true explanation of particular events which are recorded to have taken place; and thus there is the fullest confirmation given to all that is suggested upon this subject by the general views presented to us concerning the perfections and supremacy of God,—the end or object of Christ in coming into the world to seek and to save lost sinners,—and the agency of the Holy Ghost, in applying to men individually the blessings which Christ purchased *for* them, by working faith *in* them, and thereby uniting them to Christ in their effectual calling, and in preserving them in safety unto His everlasting kingdom.

*Sec. XIII.—Objections against Predestination.*

We now proceed to make some observations upon the objections which have been commonly adduced against the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, and the way in which these objections have been, and should be, met. There is no call to make such a division of the objections against Calvinism as we have made of the arguments in support of it,—namely, into, first, those which are derived from general principles, or from other connected doctrines, taught in Scripture; and, secondly, those derived from particular scriptural statements bearing directly and immediately upon the point in dispute: for it is an important general consideration, with reference to the whole subject of the objections against the Calvinistic doctrine, that the Arminians scarcely profess to have anything to adduce against it, derived from particular or specific statements of Scripture, as distinguished from general principles, or connected doctrines, alleged to be taught there. We have shown that, in favour of Calvinistic predestination, we can adduce from Scripture not only general principles which plainly involve it, and other doctrines which necessarily imply it, or from which it can be clearly and certainly deduced, but also specific statements, in which the doctrine itself is plainly, directly, and immediately taught. Arminians, of course, attempt to answer both these classes of arguments, and to produce proofs on the other side. But they do not allege that they can produce passages from Scripture which contain, directly and immediately, a negation of the Calvinistic, or an assertion of the Arminian, view, upon the precise point of predestination. Their objections against our views, and their arguments in favour of their own opinions, are wholly deduced, in the way of inference, from principles and doctrines alleged to be taught there; and not from statements which even appear to tell us, plainly and directly, that the Calvinistic doctrine upon this subject is false, or that the Arminian doctrine is true. We profess to prove not only that the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination is necessarily involved in, or clearly deducible from, the representations given us in Scripture concerning the divine perfections and the divine sovereignty, as manifested in the government of the world, and especially in the production of faith and regeneration in all in whom they are produced, but also that there are statements which, rightly interpreted, plainly and directly

tell us that God made an election or choice among men, not founded upon anything in the men elected, but on the counsel of His own will; and that this was an election of some men individually to faith, holiness, and eternal life, and was intended and fitted to secure these results in all who are comprehended under it. Arminians, of course, allege that the passages in which we find this doctrine do not really contain it; and they allege, further, that there are passages which convey representations of the perfections and providence of God,—of the powers and capacities of men,—and of the principles that determine their destiny,—which are inconsistent with this doctrine, and from which, therefore, its falsehood may be deduced in the way of inference; but they do not allege that there are any passages which treat directly of the subject of election, and which expressly, or by plain consequence *from these particular statements themselves*, tell us that there is no such election by God as Calvinists ascribe to Him,—or that there is such an election, falsely so called, as the Arminians ascribe to Him. In short, their objections against Calvinistic predestination, and their arguments in support of their own opinions, are chiefly derived from the general representations given us in Scripture concerning the perfections and moral government of God, and the powers and capacities of men, and not directly, from what it tells us, upon the subject of predestination itself.

Arminians, indeed, are accustomed to quote largely from Scripture in opposition to our doctrine and in support of their own, but these quotations only establish directly certain views in regard to the perfections and moral government of God, and the capacities and responsibilities of men; and from these views, thus established, they draw the inference, that Calvinistic predestination cannot be true, because it is inconsistent with them. We admit that they are perfectly successful in establishing from Scripture, that God is infinitely holy, just, and good,—that He is not the author of sin, and that He is not a respecter of persons,—and that men are responsible for all their actions,—that they are guilty of sin, and justly punishable in all their transgressions of God's law, in all their shortcomings of what He requires of them,—that they are guilty of peculiarly aggravated sin, in every instance in which they refuse to comply with the invitations and commands addressed to them to come to Christ, to repent and turn to God, to believe in the name of His Son,—and are thus justly responsible for their own

final perdition. They prove all this abundantly from Scripture, *but they prove nothing more*; and the only proof they have to adduce that God did not from eternity choose some men to everlasting life of His own good pleasure, and that He does not execute this decree in time by giving to *these* men faith, holiness, and perseverance, is just that the Calvinistic doctrine thus denied can be shown, in the way of inference and deduction, to be inconsistent with the representations given us in Scripture of God's perfections, and of men's capacities and responsibilities.

There is a class of texts appealed to by Arminians, that may seem to contradict this observation, though, indeed, the contradiction is only in appearance. I refer to those passages, often adduced by them, which seem to represent God as willing or desiring the salvation of all men, and Christ as dying with an intention of saving all men. It will be recollected that I have already explained, that the establishment of the position, that God did not will or purpose to save all men, and that Christ did not die with an intention of saving all men,—that is, *omnes et singulos*, or all men collectively, or any man individually (for, of course, we do not deny that, *in some sense*, God will have all men to be saved, and that Christ died for all),—proves *directly*, and not merely in the way of deduction or inference, the truth of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. And it might seem to follow, upon the ground of the same general principle,—though by a converse application of it,—that the proof, that God desired and purposed the salvation of all men, and that Christ died with an intention of saving all men, *directly, and not merely by inference*, disproves the Calvinistic, and establishes the Arminian, view of predestination. We admit, that there is a sense in which these positions might be taken, the establishment of which would directly effect this. But then the difference between the two cases lies here, that the Arminians scarcely allege that they can make out such a sense of these positions, as would establish directly their main conclusion, without needing to bring in, in order to establish it, those general representations of the perfections and moral government of God, and of the capacities and responsibilities of men, which we have described as the only real support of their cause. So far as concerns the mere statements, that God will have all men to be saved, and that Christ died for all, they could scarcely deny that there would be some ground—did we know



nothing more of the matter—for judging, to some extent, of their import and bearing *from the event or result*; and upon the ground that all men are not saved, in point of fact, while God and Christ are possessed of infinite knowledge, wisdom, and power, inferring that these statements were to be understood with some limitation, either as to the purpose or the act,—that is, as to the will or intention of God and Christ,—or as to the objects of the act, that is, *the all*. Now, in order to escape the force of this very obvious consideration, and to enable them to establish *that* sense of their positions, which alone would make them available, as *directly* disproving Calvinistic, and establishing Arminian, doctrines upon the subject of predestination, they are obliged, as the whole history of the manner in which this controversy has been conducted fully proves, to fall back upon the general representations given us in Scripture, with respect to the perfections and moral government of God, and the capacities and responsibilities of men. Thus we can still maintain the general position we have laid down,—namely, that the scriptural evidence adduced against Calvinism, and in favour of Arminianism, upon this point, does not consist of statements bearing directly and immediately upon the precise point to be proved, but of certain general representations concerning God and man, from which the falsehood of the one doctrine, and the truth of the other, are deduced in the way of inference. It is of some importance to keep this consideration in remembrance, in studying this subject, as it is well fitted to aid us in forming a right conception of the true state of the case, argumentatively, and to confirm the impression of the strength of the evidence by which the Calvinistic scheme of theology is supported, and of the uncertain and unsatisfactory character of the arguments by which it is assailed.

The evidence adduced by the Arminians from Scripture just proves, that God is infinitely holy, just, and good,—that He is not the author of sin,—that He is no respecter of persons,—and that a man is responsible for all his actions;—that he incurs guilt, and is justly punished for his disobedience to God's law, and for his refusal to repent and believe the gospel. They infer from this, that the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination is false; while we maintain—and we are not called upon to maintain more, at this stage of the argument—that this inference cannot be established; and that, in consequence, the proper evidence, direct and inferen-

tial, in favour of the Calvinistic argument, stands unassailed, and ought, in right reason, to compel our assent to its truth.

While the objections to the Calvinistic doctrine, from its alleged inconsistency with the divine perfections and moral government, and from men's capacities and responsibilities, are the only real arguments against it, the discussion of these does not constitute the only materials to be found in the works which have been written upon the subject. Calvinists have had no small labour, while conducting the defence of their cause, in exposing the irrelevancy of many of the objections which have been adduced on the other side, and the misapprehensions and misstatements of their doctrine, on which many of the common objections against it are based; and it may be proper to make some observations upon these points, before we proceed to advert to the method in which the true and real difficulties of the case ought to be met.

Under the head of pure irrelevancies, are to be classed all the attempts which have been made by Arminian writers to found an argument against Calvinism upon the mere proof of the unchangeable obligation of the moral law,—the universal acceptableness to God of holiness, and its indispensable necessity to men's happiness,—the necessity of faith and repentance, holiness and perseverance, in order to their admission into heaven. There is nothing, in these and similar doctrines, which even appears to be at variance with any of the principles of the Calvinistic system. We do not deny, or need to deny, or to modify, or to throw into the background, any one of these positions. The question is not as to the certainty and invariableness of the connection between faith and holiness on the one hand, and heaven and happiness on the other. This is admitted on both sides; it is assumed and provided for upon both systems. The question is only as to the way and manner in which the maintenance of this connection invariably has been provided for, and is developed in fact; and here it is contended, that the Calvinistic view of the matter is much more accordant with every consideration suggested by the scriptural representations of man's natural condition, and of the relation in which, both as a creature and as a sinner, he stands to God.

It is also a pure irrelevancy to talk, as is often done, as if Calvinistic doctrines implied, or produced, or assumed, any diminution of the number of those who are ultimately saved, as com-

pared with Arminianism. A dogmatic assertion as to the comparative numbers of those of the human race who are saved and of those who perish, in the ultimate result of things, forms no part of Calvinism. *The actual result* of salvation, in the case of a portion of the human race, and of destruction in the case of the rest, is the same upon both systems, though they differ in the exposition of the principles by which the result is regulated and brought about. In surveying the past history of the world, or looking around on those who now occupy the earth, with the view of forming a sort of estimate of the fate that has overtaken, or yet awaits, the generations of their fellow-men (we speak, of course, of those who have grown up to give indications of their personal character; and there is nothing to prevent a Calvinist believing that all dying in infancy are saved), Calvinists introduce no other principle, and apply no other standard, than just the will of God, plainly revealed in His word, *as to what those things are which accompany salvation*; and, consequently, if, in doing so, they should form a different estimate as to the comparative results from what Arminians would admit, this could not arise from anything peculiar to them, as holding Calvinistic doctrines, but only from their having formed and applied a higher standard of personal character—that is, *of the holiness and morality which are necessary to prepare men for admission to heaven*—than the Arminians are willing to countenance. And yet it is very common among Arminian writers to represent Calvinistic doctrines as leading, or tending to lead, those who hold them, to consign to everlasting misery a large portion of the human race, whom the Arminians would admit to the enjoyment of heaven. But it is needless to dwell longer upon such manifestly irrelevant objections as these.

It is of more importance to advert to some of the misapprehensions and misstatements of Calvinistic doctrine, on which many of the common objections to it are based. These, as we have had occasion to mention, in explaining the state of the question, are chiefly connected with the subject of reprobation,—a topic on which Arminians are fond of dwelling,—though it is very evident, that the course they usually pursue in the discussion of this subject, indicates anything but a real love of truth. I have already illustrated the unfairness of the attempts they usually make, to give priority and prominence to the consideration of

reprobation, as distinguished from election; and have referred to the fact, that the Arminians, at the Synod of Dort, insisted on beginning with the discussion of the subject of reprobation, and complained of it as a great hardship, when the synod refused to concede this.\* And they have continued generally to pursue a similar policy. Whitby, in his celebrated book on the *Five Points*,—which has long been a standard work among Episcopalian Arminians, though it is not characterized by any ability,—devotes the *first two* chapters to the subject of reprobation. And John Wesley, in his work entitled, “*Predestination Calmly Considered*,”† begins with proving that election necessarily implies reprobation, and thereafter *confines* his attention to the latter topic. Their object in this is very manifest. They know that reprobation can be more easily misrepresented, and set forth in a light that is fitted to prejudice men’s feelings against it. I have already illustrated the unfairness of this policy, and have also taken occasion to advert to the difference between election and reprobation,—the nature and import of the doctrine we really hold on the latter subject,—and the misrepresentations which Arminians commonly make of our sentiments regarding it.

We have now to notice the real and serious objections against the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination derived from its alleged inconsistency,—first, with the holiness, justice, and goodness of God; and, secondly, with men’s responsibility for all their acts of disobedience or transgression of God’s law, including their refusal to repent and believe the gospel, and being thus the true authors and causes of their own destruction,—the second of these objections being, in substance, just the same as that which is

\* Davenant’s *Animadversions* on Hoard’s “*God’s Love to Mankind*,” p. 49. Dr Gill’s *Doctrine of Predestination* stated, in answer to Wesley, pp. 21–2.

† Works, vol. x., p. 204.

For a full discussion of the objections to the Calvinistic doctrine, see “*The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation*,” pp. 531, etc., etc. (Edrs.) See also Amesii *Medulla Theologiæ*, Lib. i., c. xxv. *Mastricht*. (who copies Ames), Lib. iii., c. iv., sec. vi., p. 304. *Turretin. Loc. iv.*,

Qu. xiv., secs. i.–xvii., tom. i. Davenant’s *Animadversions, passim*. Davenant, *De Prædestinatione et Reprobatione*, pp. 113–14, 137, 172–3, 182–8, 196–8, 201–2. Gill’s *Cause of God and Truth*, Part iii., chaps. i. and ii. Gill’s *Doctrine of Predestination*. Pictet, *La Théologie Chrétienne*, Liv. viii., c. vii., p. 557. De Moor, *Commentarius*, c. vii., secs. xxix.–xxxvi., tom. ii., pp. 96–115. Edwards’ *Remarks on Important Theological Controversies*, c. iii., secs. xxxv.–vii.



founded upon the commands, invitations, and expostulations addressed to men in Scripture. The consideration of these objections has given rise to endless discussions on the most difficult and perplexing of all topics; but I shall limit myself to a few observations concerning it, directed merely to the object of suggesting some hints as to the chief things to be kept in view in the study of it.

First, there is one general consideration to which I have repeatedly had occasion to advert in its bearing upon other subjects, and which applies equally to this,—namely, that these allegations of the Arminians are merely objections against the truth of a doctrine, for which a large amount of evidence, that cannot be directly answered and disposed of, has been adduced, and that they ought to be kept in their proper place as objections. The practical effect of this consideration is, that, in dealing with these allegations, we should not forget that the condition of the argument is this,—that the Calvinistic doctrine having been established by a large amount of evidence, direct and inferential, which cannot be directly answered, all that we are bound to do in dealing with objections which may be advanced against it,—that is, objections to the doctrine itself, as distinguished from objections to the proof,—is merely to show that these objections have not been substantiated,—that nothing has really been proved by our opponents, which affords any sufficient ground for rejecting the body of evidence by which our doctrine has been established. The *onus probandi* lies upon them; we have merely to show that they have not succeeded in proving any position which, from its intrinsic nature, viewed in connection with the evidence on which it rests, is sufficient to compel us to abandon the doctrine against which it is adduced. This is a consideration which it is important for us to keep in view and to apply in all cases to which it is truly and fairly applicable, as being fitted to preserve the argument clear and unembarrassed, and to promote the interests of truth. It is specially incumbent upon us to attend to the true condition of the argument in this respect, when the objection is founded on, or connected with, considerations that have an immediate relation to a subject so far above our comprehension as the attributes of God, and the principles that regulate His dealings with His creatures. In dealing with objections derived from this source, we should be careful to confine ourselves within the limits which

the logical conditions of the argument point out, lest, by taking a wider compass, we should be led to follow the objectors in their presumptuous speculations about matters which are too high for us. The obligation to act upon this principle, in dealing with objections with respect to the subject under consideration, may be said to be specially imposed upon us by the example of the Apostle Paul, who had to deal with the very same objections, and whose mode of disposing of them should be a guide and model to us.

We have already had occasion to advert to the fact—as affording a very strong presumption that Paul's doctrine was Calvinistic—that he gives us to understand that the doctrine which he taught in the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans was likely, or rather certain, to be assailed with the very same objections which have constantly been directed against Calvinism,—namely, that it contradicted God's justice, and excluded man's responsibility for his sins and ultimate destiny,—objections which are not likely to have been ever adduced against Arminianism, but which naturally, obviously, and spontaneously, spring up in opposition to Calvinism in the minds of men who are not accustomed to realize the sovereignty and supremacy of God, and to follow out what these great truths involve; who, in short, are not in the habit, in the ordinary train of their thoughts and reflections, of giving to God that place in the administration of the government of His creatures to which He is entitled. But we have at present to do, not with the evidence afforded by the fact that these objections naturally suggested themselves against the apostle's doctrine, but with the lesson which his example teaches as to the way in which they should be dealt with and disposed of. In place of formally and elaborately answering them, he just resolves the whole matter into the sovereignty and supremacy of God, and men's incapacity either of frustrating His plans or of comprehending His counsels. “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?” etc. The conduct of the apostle in this matter is plainly fitted to teach us that we should rely mainly upon the direct and proper evidence of the doctrine itself; and, when satisfied upon that point, pay little regard to objections, however obvious or plausible they may be, since the subject is one which we cannot fully understand, and resolves ultimately into an incomprehensible mystery, which our powers are unable to fathom.

This is plainly the lesson which the conduct of the apostle is fitted to teach us ; and it would have been well if both Calvinists and Arminians had been more careful to learn and to practise it. Arminians have often pressed these objections by very presumptuous speculations about the divine nature and attributes, and about what it was or was not befitting God, or consistent with His perfections, for Him to do ; and Calvinists, in dealing with these objections, have often gone far beyond what the rules of strict reasoning required, or the apostle's example warranted,—and have indulged in speculations almost as presumptuous as those of their opponents. Calvinists have, I think, frequently erred, and involved themselves in difficulties, by attempting too much in explaining and defending their doctrines ; and much greater caution and reserve, in entering into intricate speculations upon this subject, is not only dictated by sound policy, with reference to controversial success, but is imposed, as a matter of obligation, by just views of the sacredness and incomprehensibility of the subject, and of the deference due to the example of an inspired apostle. Instead of confining themselves to the one object of showing that Arminians *have not proved* that Calvinism necessarily implies anything inconsistent with what we know certainly concerning the perfections and moral government of God, or the capacities and responsibilities of man, they have often entered into speculations, by which they imagined that they could directly and positively vindicate their doctrines from all objections, and prove them to be encompassed with few or no difficulties. And thus the spectacle has not unfrequently been exhibited, on the one hand, of some shortsighted Arminian imagining that he has discovered a method of putting the objections against Calvinism in a much more conclusive and impressive form than they had ever received before ; and, on the other hand, of some shortsighted Calvinist imagining that he had discovered a method of answering the objections much more satisfactorily than any that had been previously employed ; while, all the time, the state of the case continued unchanged,—the real difficulty having merely had its position slightly shifted, or being a little more thrown into the background at one point, only to appear again at another, as formidable as ever. The truth is, that no real additional strength, in substance, can be given to the objection, beyond what it had as adduced against the apostle, “Is there unrighteousness with God? why doth He yet find fault,

for who hath resisted His will?" and that nothing more can be done in the way of answering it, than bringing out the ground which he has suggested and employed,—of resolving all into the sovereignty and supremacy of God, and the absolute dependence and utter worthlessness of man, and admitting that the subject involves an inscrutable mystery, which we are unable to fathom.

Secondly, it is important to remember that these objections—if they have any weight, and in so far as they have any—are directed equally against Calvinistic views of the divine procedure, as of the divine decrees,—of what God does, or abstains from doing, in time, in regard to those who are saved and those who perish, as well as of what He has decreed or purposed to do, or to abstain from doing, from eternity. Arminians, indeed, as I formerly explained, do not venture formally to deny that whatever God does in time, He decreed or purposed from eternity to do; but still they are accustomed to represent the matter in such a way as is fitted to convey the impression, that some special and peculiar difficulty attaches to the eternal decrees or purposes ascribed to God, *different in kind* from, or *superior in degree* to, that attaching to the procedure ascribed to Him in providence. And hence it becomes important—in order at once to enable us to form a juster estimate of the amount of evidence in favour of our doctrine, and of the uncertain and unsatisfactory character of the objections adduced against it—to have our minds familiar with the very obvious, but very important, consideration, that Calvinists do not regard anything as comprehended in the eternal decrees or purposes of God, above and beyond what they regard God as actually doing in time in the execution of these decrees. If it be inconsistent with the perfections and moral government of God, and with the capacities and responsibilities of men, that God should form certain decrees or purposes from eternity in regard to men, it must be equally, but not more, inconsistent with them, that He should execute these decrees in time. And anything which it is consistent with God's perfections and man's moral nature that God should do, or effect, or bring to pass, in time, it can be no more objectionable to regard Him as having from eternity decreed to do.

The substance of the actual procedure which Calvinists ascribe to God in time,—in connection with the ultimate destiny of those who are saved and of those who perish,—is this, that in some men



He produces or effects faith, regeneration, holiness, and perseverance, by an exercise of almighty power which they cannot frustrate or overcome, and which, certainly and infallibly, produces the result,—and that the rest of men He leaves in their natural state of guilt and depravity, withholding from them, or *de facto* not bestowing upon them, that almighty and efficacious grace, without which—as He, of course, well knows—they are unable to repent and believe,—the inevitable result thus being, that they perish in their sins. If this be the actual procedure of God in dealing with men in time, it manifestly introduces no new or additional difficulty into the matter to say, that He has from eternity decreed or resolved to do all this; and yet many persons seem to entertain a lurking notion,—which the common Arminian mode of stating and enforcing these objections is fitted to cherish,—that, over and above any difficulties that may attach to the doctrine which teaches that God *does* this, there is some special and additional difficulty attaching to the doctrine which represents Him as having decreed or resolved to do this from eternity. To guard against this source of misconception and confusion, it is desirable, both in estimating the force of the evidence in support of Calvinism, and the strength of the Arminian objections, to conceive of them as brought to bear upon what our doctrine represents God as doing, rather than upon what it represents Him as decreeing to do; while, of course, the Arminians are quite entitled to adduce, if they can find them, any special objections against the general position which we fully and openly avow,—namely, that all that God does in time, He decreed from eternity to do. The substance, then, of the objection, is really this,—that it is inconsistent with the divine perfections and moral government of God, and with the capacities and responsibilities of men, that God should certainly and effectually, by His almighty grace, produce faith and regeneration in some men, that He may thereby secure their eternal salvation, and abstain from bestowing upon others this almighty grace, or from effecting in them those changes, with the full knowledge that the inevitable result must be, that He will consign them to everlasting misery as a punishment for their impenitence and unbelief, as well as their other sins.

Thirdly, we observe that the direct and proper answer to the Arminian objections is this,—that nothing which Calvinists

ascribe to God, or represent Him as doing, in connection with the character, actions, and ultimate destiny, either of those who are saved or of those who perish, *can be proved* necessarily to involve anything inconsistent with the perfections of God, or the principles of His moral government, or with the just rights and claims, or the actual capacities and responsibilities, of men. With respect to the alleged inconsistency of our doctrine with the perfections and moral government of God, this can be maintained and defended only by means of assertions, for which no evidence can be produced, and which are manifestly, in their general character, uncertain and presumptuous. It is a much safer and more becoming course, to endeavour to ascertain what God has done or will do, and to rest in the conviction, that all this is quite consistent with His infinite holiness, justice, goodness, and mercy, than to reason back from our necessarily defective and inadequate conceptions of these infinite perfections, as to what He *must do, or cannot do*.

It cannot be proved that we ascribe to God anything inconsistent with infinite holiness, because it cannot be shown that our doctrine necessarily implies that He is involved in the responsibility of the production of the sinful actions of men. It cannot be proved that we ascribe to Him anything inconsistent with His justice, because it cannot be shown that our doctrine necessarily implies that He withholds from any man anything to which that man has a just and rightful claim. It cannot be proved that we ascribe to Him anything inconsistent with His goodness and mercy, because it cannot be shown that our doctrine necessarily implies that He does not bestow upon men all the goodness and mercy which it consists with the combined glory of His whole moral perfections to impart to them, and because it is evidently unreasonable to represent anything as inconsistent with God's goodness and mercy which actually takes place under His moral government, when He could have prevented it if He had chosen. On such grounds as these, it is easy enough to show, as it has been often shown, that the allegation that Calvinism ascribes to God anything necessarily inconsistent with His moral perfections and government, cannot be substantiated upon any clear and certain grounds. This is sufficient to prove that the objection is possessed of no real weight. In consequence, probably, of the sounder principles of philosophizing now more generally prevalent

in this country, the objection to Calvinism—on which its opponents used to rest so much, derived from its alleged inconsistency with the moral perfections of God—has been virtually abandoned by some of the most distinguished anti-Calvinistic writers of the present day,—such as Archbishop Whately and Bishop Copleston.\*

It may seem, however, as if that branch of the objection had a stronger and firmer foundation to rest upon, which is based upon the alleged inconsistency of our doctrine with what is known concerning the capacities and responsibilities of men. Man is indeed better known to us than God; and there is not the same presumption in arguing from the qualities and properties of man, as in arguing from the perfections and attributes of God. It is fully admitted as a great truth, which is completely established, and which ought never to be overlooked or thrown into the background, but to be constantly and strenuously enforced and maintained,—that man is responsible for all his actions,—that he incurs guilt, and is justly punishable whenever he transgresses or comes short of anything which God requires of men, and, more especially, whenever he refuses to comply with the command addressed to him, to repent and turn to God, and to believe in the name of His Son. All this is fully conceded; but still it is denied that any conclusive proof has ever been adduced, that there is anything in all this necessarily inconsistent with what Calvinists represent God as doing, or abstaining from doing, in connection with the character, actions, and destiny of men. God has so constituted man, and has placed him in such circumstances, as to make him fully responsible for his actions. He has made full provision in man's constitution, not only for his being responsible, but for his feeling and knowing that he is responsible; and this conviction of responsibility is probably never wholly extinguished in men's breasts. We doubt very much whether there ever was a man who firmly and honestly believed that he was not responsible for his violations of God's law. There have been men who professed to deny this, and have even professed to base their denial of their own responsibility upon views that resembled those generally entertained by Calvinists. And Arminians have been

\* See the Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation, p. 458 (Edrs.).  
Whately on Difficulties in St Paul's

Writings, Essay iii., sec. iv., pp. 144-7,  
fifth edition, 1845.

sometimes disposed to catch at such cases, as if they afforded evidence that the maintenance of Calvinistic doctrines, and the maintenance of a sense of personal responsibility, were incompatible with each other. But the cases have not been very numerous where men even professed to have renounced a sense of their own responsibility; and even where this profession has been made, there is good ground to doubt whether it really coincided with an actual conviction, decidedly and honestly held, and was not rather a hypocritical pretence, though mixed, it may be, with some measure of self-delusion.

It is admitted generally, that it is unsuitable to the very limited powers and capacities of man to *make his perception* of the harmony, or consistency, of doctrines, the test and standard of their actual harmony and consistency with each other; and that, consequently, it is unwarrantable for us to reject a doctrine, which appears to be established by satisfactory evidence, direct and appropriate, merely because we cannot perceive *how* it can be reconciled with another doctrine, which, when taken by itself, seems also to be supported by satisfactory evidence. We may find it impossible to explain how the doctrine of God's fore-ordination and providence—of His giving or withholding efficacious grace—can be reconciled, or shown to be consistent, with that of men's responsibility; but this is no sufficient reason why we should reject either of them, since they both appear to be sufficiently established by satisfactory proof,—proof which, when examined upon the ground of its own merits, it seems impossible successfully to assail. *The proof adduced, that they are inconsistent with each other, is derived from considerations more uncertain and precarious than those which supply the proof of the truth of each of them singly and separately; and therefore, in right reason, it should not be regarded as sufficient to warrant us in rejecting either the one or the other, though we may not be able to perceive and develop their harmony or consistency. Let the apparent inconsistency, or difficulty of reconciling them, be held a good reason for scrutinizing rigidly the evidence upon which each rests; but if the evidence for both be satisfactory and conclusive, then let both be received and admitted, even though the difficulty of establishing their consistency, or our felt inability to perceive and explain it, remains unaltered.*

It is also to be remembered, that Calvinists usually maintain



that it has never been satisfactorily proved that anything more is necessary to render a rational being responsible for his actions than the full power of doing as he chooses,—of giving full effect to his own volitions,—a power the possession and exercise of which does not even seem to be inconsistent with God's foreordination of all events, and His providence in bringing them to pass; and also that they generally hold that men's inability or incapacity to *will* anything spiritually good is a penal infliction or punishment justly and righteously inflicted upon account of sin,—a subject which I have already discussed. On these various grounds, it has been shown that the validity of the Arminian objections cannot be established,—that their leading positions upon this subject cannot be proved,—and that, therefore, there is no sufficient reason, in anything they have adduced, why we should reject a doctrine so fully established by evidence which, on the ground of its own proper merits, cannot be successfully assailed.

Fourthly, There is one other important position maintained by Calvinists upon this subject, which completes the vindication of their cause, and most fully warrants them to put aside the Arminian objections as insufficient to effect the object for which they are adduced. It is this,—that the real difficulties connected with this mysterious subject are not peculiar to the Calvinistic system of theology, but apply almost, if not altogether, equally to every other,—that no system can get rid of the difficulties with which the subject is encompassed, or afford any real explanation of them,—and that, at bottom, the real differences among different theories merely mark the different positions in which the difficulties are placed, without materially affecting their magnitude or their solubility. It is very plain that God and men, in some way, concur or combine in forming man's character, in producing man's actions, and in determining man's fate. This is not a doctrine peculiar to any one scheme of religion professedly founded on the Christian revelation, but is common to them all,—nay, it must be admitted by all men who do not take refuge in atheism. It is very plain, likewise, that the explanation of the way and manner in which God and men thus combine or concur in producing these results, involves mysteries which never have been fully solved, and which, therefore, we are warranted in supposing, cannot be solved by men in their present condition, and with their existing capacities and means of knowledge. This difficulty

consists chiefly in this, that when we look at the actual results,—including, as these results do, men's depravity by nature, sinful actions, and everlasting destruction,—we are unable to comprehend or explain how God and man can both be concerned in the production of them, while yet each acts in the matter consistently with the powers and qualities which he possesses,—God consistently with both His natural and His moral attributes,—and man consistently with both his entire dependence as a creature, and his free agency as a responsible being. This is the great mystery which we cannot fathom; and all the difficulties connected with the investigation of religion, or the exposition of the relation between God and man, can easily be shown to resolve or run up into this. This is a difficulty which attaches to every system except atheism,—which every system is bound to meet and to grapple with,—and which no system can fully explain and dispose of; and this, too, is a position which Archbishop Whately has had the sagacity and the candour to perceive and admit.\*

In the endless speculations which have been directed professedly to the elucidation of this mysterious subject, there has been exhibited some tendency to run into opposite extremes,—to give prominence to God's natural, to the comparative omission or disregard of His moral, attributes,—to give prominence to man's dependence as a creature, to the comparative omission or disregard of his free agency as a responsible being,—or the reverse. The prevailing tendency, however, has been towards the second of these extremes,—namely, that of excluding God, and exalting man,—of giving prominence to God's moral attributes, or rather those of them which seem to come least into collision with man's dignity and self-sufficiency, and to overlook His infinite power, knowledge, and wisdom, and His sovereign supremacy,—to exalt man's share in the production of the results in the exercise of his own powers and capacities, as if he were, or could be, independent of God. Experience abundantly proves that the general tendency of men is to lean to this extreme, and thus to rob God of the honour and glory which belong to Him. This, therefore, is the extreme which should be most carefully guarded against; and it should be guarded against just by implicitly receiving

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\* Essays, fifth edition, p. 146.

whatever doctrine upon this subject seems to rest upon satisfactory evidence,—however humbling it may be to the pride and self-sufficiency of man, and however unable we may be to perceive its consistency with other doctrines which we also believe.

The pride and presumption, the ignorance and depravity, of man, all lead him to exclude God, and to exalt himself, and to go as far as he can in the way of solving all mysteries; *and both these tendencies* combine in leading the mass of mankind to lean towards the Arminian rather than the Calvinistic doctrine upon this subject. But neither can the mystery be solved, nor can man be exalted to that position of independence and self-sufficiency to which he aspires, unless God be wholly excluded, unless His most essential and unquestionable perfections be denied, unless His supreme dominion in the government of His creatures be altogether set aside. The real difficulty is to explain how moral evil should, under the government of a God of infinite holiness, power, and wisdom, have been introduced, and have prevailed so extensively; and especially—for this is at once the most awful and mysterious department of the subject—how it should have been permitted to issue, in fact, in the everlasting misery and destruction of so many of God's creatures. It is when we realize what this, as an actual result, involves; and when we reflect on what is implied in the consideration, that upon any theory this state of things does come to pass, under the government of a God of infinite knowledge and power, who foresaw it all, and could have prevented it all, if this had been His will, that we see most clearly and most impressively the groundlessness and the presumption of the objections commonly adduced against the Calvinistic scheme of theology; and that we feel most effectually constrained to acquiesce in the apostle's resolution of the whole matter, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? or who hath given to Him, and it shall be recompensed to him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever."\*

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\* Rom. xi. 33-36. See this subject | the Theology of the Reformation,"  
referred to in "The Reformers and | pp. 468, etc. (Edrs.)

*Sec. XIV.—Perseverance of Saints.*

The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, or of believers, is to be regarded as an essential part of the Calvinistic scheme of theology. That it is so is plain, from the nature of the case,—the obvious necessary connection of the different doctrines of Calvinism with each other,—and also from the fact, that the doctrine has been held by all Calvinists, and denied by almost all Arminians. There are two apparent exceptions to this historical statement; and it may be proper to advert to them, as they are the cases of two no less important persons than Augustine and Arminius.

Augustine seems to have thought, that men who were true believers, and who were regenerated, so as to have been really brought under the influence of divine truth and religious principle, might fall away and finally perish; but then he did not think that those persons who might, or did, thus fall away and perish, belonged to the number of those who had been predestinated, or elected, to life. He held that all those who were elected to life must, and did, persevere, and thus attain to salvation. It was, of course, abundantly evident, that if God chose some men, absolutely and unconditionally, to eternal life,—and this Augustine firmly believed,—these persons must, and would, certainly be saved. Whether persons might believe and be regenerated who had not been predestinated to life, and who, in consequence, might fall away, and thereby fail to attain salvation, is a distinct question; and on this question Augustine's views seem to have been obscured and perverted, by the notions that then generally prevailed about the objects and effects of outward ordinances,—and especially by something like the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, which has been, perhaps, as powerful and extensive a cause of deadly error as any doctrine that Satan ever invented. Augustine's error, then, lay in supposing that men might believe and be regenerated who had not been elected to life, and might consequently fail of ultimate salvation; but he never did, and never could, embrace any notion so irrational and inconsequential, as that God could have absolutely chosen some even to life, and then permitted them to fall away and to perish; and the negation of this notion, which Augustine never held, constitutes the sum and substance of what Calvinists have taught upon the subject of perseverance.

Arminius never wholly renounced the doctrine of the certain



perseverance of all believers, even after he had abandoned all the other principles of Calvinism, but spoke of this as a point on which he had not fully made up his mind, and which, he thought, required further investigation,—thus virtually bearing testimony to the difficulty of disposing of the scriptural evidence on which the doctrine rests. His immediate followers, likewise, professed for a time some hesitation upon this point; but their contemporary opponents\* do not seem to have given them much credit for sincerity in the doubts which they professed to entertain regarding it, because, while they did not, for a time, directly and explicitly support a negative conclusion, the whole current of their statements and arguments seemed plainly enough to indicate, that they had already renounced the generally received doctrine of the Reformed churches upon this subject. They very soon, even before the Synod of Dort, openly renounced the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, along with the other doctrines of Calvinism; and I am not aware that any instance has since occurred, in which any Calvinist has hesitated to maintain this doctrine, or any Arminian has hesitated to deny it.

This doctrine is thus stated in our Confession of Faith:†  
 “They whom God hath accepted in His Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.” Little needs to be said in explanation of the meaning of these statements. The subject of the proposition is a certain class of persons who are marked out by two qualities,—namely, that God has accepted them in His Beloved, and that He has effectually called and sanctified them by His Spirit. This implies that they are persons on whose *state* and *character* an important change has taken place. As to their state, they have passed from that condition of guilt and condemnation, in which all men lie by nature, into a condition of favour and acceptance with God, so that their sins are pardoned, and they are admitted into God’s family and friendship, upon the ground of what Christ has done and suffered for them. As to their character, they have been renewed in the spirit of their minds by the operation of the Holy Ghost; their natural enmity to God, and

\* Amesii Coronis, p. 285. Anti-  
 synodalia, p. 292.

† C. xvii., s. i.

their depravity, have been subdued; holy principles have been implanted in their hearts; and they have entered upon a course of new obedience. These changes are manifestly represented in Scripture as being, wherever they have taken place, inseparably connected with faith in Christ Jesus; so that the persons here described are just true believers in Christ,—men who have been born again of the word of God, through the belief of the truth. Of all such persons it is asserted, that they can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace;—that is, from the condition of acceptance with God, and of personal holiness, into which they have been brought, but shall certainly persevere therein,—that is, in the state or condition previously described,—and be eternally saved. It is asserted, not merely that none of these do, in point of fact, fall away, and that all of them, in point of fact, persevere and are saved; but *that they cannot* fall away,—some effectual and infallible provision having been made to prevent this result.

The statement, that they can neither totally nor finally fall away, has reference to a notion which has been broached, especially by some Lutheran writers, who taught that believers or saints might fall away totally, though not finally. The notion which these persons seem to have entertained was something of this sort,—that men who had once believed might sin so much as to forfeit and lose altogether the privileges of the condition, both as to state and character, into which they had been brought by believing,—so as to become, in so far as concerned the favour and acceptance with which God regarded them, and the moral principles by which, for the time, they were animated, as bad as they were before they believed; but that all such persons would be again brought, *de novo*, into a state of grace, and that thus they might fall away, or apostatize, totally, but not finally. This notion of a total, but not final, falling away, is evidently derived much more from observation of what sometimes takes place in the church, than from the study of God's word. Cases do sometimes occur, in which believers fall into heinous sins; and the persons to whose views we are now referring seem to think that such cases cannot be explained, except upon the supposition that these sins imply, or produce, a total falling away from a state of grace, while they so far defer to the general strain of Scripture as to admit, that all in whom faith and regeneration have been once produced will certainly be recovered from their apostasy, and will be eter-

nally saved. It was in opposition to this notion that our Confession asserted, that believers cannot fall away *totally* any more than *finally*,—meaning thereby, that when a state of grace, as including both acceptance with God and the existence and operation of holy moral principles in a nature renewed, has been once produced, it is never again totally lost, so as that these persons are regarded and treated by God as aliens and enemies, like those who are still living in their natural condition of guilt, or ever become again as thoroughly depraved, in point of principle and motive,—as destitute of all holiness of nature and character,—as they once were, however heinous the particular sins into which they may have fallen.

This doctrine, of the perseverance of saints or believers, is evidently a necessary and indispensable part of the Calvinistic system of theology,—being clearly involved in, or deducible from, the other fundamental doctrines of the system, which we have already considered. If it be true, that God has, from eternity, absolutely and unconditionally, chosen some men, certain persons, to eternal life, these men, assuredly, will all infallibly be saved. If it be also true, that He has arranged that no man shall be saved, unless upon earth he be brought into a state of grace, unless he repent and believe, and persevere in faith and holiness, He will assuredly give to all whom He has chosen to life faith and holiness, and will infallibly secure that they shall persevere therein unto the end. And as it is further taught by Calvinists, that God produces in some men faith and conversion in the execution of His decree of election, just because He has decreed to save *these* men,—and does so for the purpose of saving them,—the *whole* of what they teach under the head of perseverance is thus effectually provided for, and thoroughly established,—faith and regeneration being never produced in any except those whose ultimate salvation has been secured, and whose perseverance, therefore, in faith and holiness must be certain and infallible. All this is too plain to require any illustration; and Calvinists must, of course, in consistency, take the responsibility of maintaining the certain perseverance of all believers or saints,—of all in whom faith and holiness have been once produced. It is not quite so clear and certain, that Arminians are bound, in consistency, to deny this doctrine,—though the general spirit and tendency of their system are adverse to it. They might, perhaps, without inconsistency, hold that it is possible, that all who have been enabled to repent and believe will, in point of fact, persevere

and be saved; but as they teach that men, in the exercise of their own free-will, can resist and frustrate the grace of God's Spirit, exerted in strength sufficient to produce faith and conversion, they could scarcely avoid maintaining *the possibility, at least*, of their throwing it off after it had taken possession of them, and thus finally falling away.

Their general practice is, to give much prominence, in discussion, to this subject of perseverance; and they think that this affords them a good opportunity of bringing out, in the most palpable and effective way, their more popular objections against the Calvinistic system in general, and also of supplying their lack of direct scriptural evidence upon the precise question of predestination, by adducing, in opposition to that doctrine, the proof they think they can bring forward from Scripture, that believers and saints—all of whom Calvinists regard as having been elected to life—may and do fall away, and perish.

We may advert to these two points,—namely, first, to the form in which, in connection with this doctrine, Arminians commonly put the objection against Calvinism generally; and, secondly, to the evidence against it which the scriptural statements, upon this particular topic, are alleged to furnish.

Their objection, of course, is, that, if those who have been once brought into a state of grace cannot finally fall away and perish, then they may, and probably will,—this being the natural tendency of such a doctrine,—live in careless indifference and security, and be little concerned to avoid sin, since it cannot affect injuriously their everlasting condition. Now, this objection is just a specimen of a general mode of misrepresentation, to which Arminians very commonly resort in this whole controversy,—that, namely, of taking a part of our doctrine, disjoining it from the rest, and then founding an objection upon this particular and defective view of it. The great general principle which we hold and teach, that the means are fore-ordained as well as the end, affords a complete answer to the objection. But we may now advert more particularly to the way in which this general principle bears upon the special aspect of the objection, as brought out in connection with the doctrine of perseverance. The perseverance which we contend for,—and which, we say, is effectually provided for and secured,—is just a perseverance in faith and holiness,—a continuing steadfast in believing, and in bringing



forth all the fruits of righteousness. Perseverance is not merely a continuing for some time upon earth after faith and regeneration have been produced, and then being admitted, as a matter of course, to heaven, without any regard to the moral history of the intervening period; it is a perseverance in the course on which men have entered,—a perseverance unto the end in the exercise of faith and in the practice of holiness. This, we say, has been provided for, and will be certainly effected. The case of a man who appeared to have been brought to faith and repentance, but who afterwards fell into habitual carelessness and sin, and died in this condition, is not a case which exhibits and illustrates the tendency and effects of our doctrine of perseverance, rightly understood, and viewed in all its extent; on the contrary, it contradicts it; and, if it were clearly established to have become a real case of faith and conversion, it would, we admit, *disprove it*. In regard to all such cases, it is incumbent upon us, not merely from the necessity of defending our doctrine against objections, *but from the intrinsic nature of the doctrine itself*, to assert and maintain, that true faith and regeneration never existed, and therefore could not be persevered in. We simply look away from the partial and defective view of our doctrine given by our opponents,—we just take in the *whole* doctrine as we are accustomed to explain it; and we see at once, that the supposed case, and the objection founded upon it, are wholly irrelevant,—that our real doctrine has nothing to do with it. If our doctrine be true, then no such case could possibly occur, where true faith had once been produced, because that very doctrine implies that perseverance *in this faith*, and *in the holiness which springs from it*, has been provided for and secured; and if a case of their falling away could be established with regard to a believer, then the fair inference would be, not that our doctrine produced, or tended to produce, such a result, but that the doctrine was unfounded.

As the objection derived from the alleged tendency of our doctrine thus originates in a partial or defective view of what the doctrine is, so, in like manner, any such abuse or perversion of the doctrine by those who profess to believe and to act upon it, must originate in the same source. They can abuse it, to encourage themselves in carelessness and sin, only when they look at a part of the doctrine, and shut out the whole,—when they forget that the means have been fore-ordained as well as the end,—

that the thing which God has promised and provided for is just perseverance in the exercise of faith and in the practice of holiness; and that He has provided for securing this just *because* He has established an invariable connection between perseverance unto the end in faith and holiness, as a means, and eternal salvation, as the end. The true way to judge of the practical tendency and result of a doctrine, is to conceive of it as fully and correctly understood in its real character, in its right relations, and in its whole extent,—to conceive of it as firmly and cordially believed, and as judiciously and intelligently applied; and then to consider what effect it is fitted to produce upon the views, motives, and conduct of those who so understand, believe, and apply it. When the doctrine of the perseverance of believers is tested in this way, it can be easily shown, not only to have no tendency to encourage men in carelessness and indifference about the regulation of their conduct, but to have a tendency directly the reverse. In virtue of the principle of the means being fore-ordained as well as the end, and of an invariable connection being thus established between perseverance in faith and holiness on the one hand, and salvation on the other, it leaves all the ordinary obligations and motives to steadfastness and diligence—to unshaken and increasing holiness of heart and life, and to the use of all the means which conduce to the promotion of this result,—to say the very least wholly unimpaired, to operate with all the force which properly belongs to them. The position of a man who has been enabled by God's grace to repent and believe,—who is persuaded that this change has been effected upon him,—and who, in consequence, entertains the conviction that he will persevere and be saved, viewed in connection with other principles plainly revealed, and quite consistent with all the doctrines of Calvinism, is surely fitted to call into operation the strongest and most powerful motives derived from every consideration relating to God and to himself,—his past history, his present situation, and prospects, all combining to constrain him to run in the way of God's commandments with enlarged heart. And then, it is further to be remembered, that the doctrine which he believes necessarily involves in it, as a part of itself,—or, at least, as an immediate consequence,—that he can have no good ground for believing that he is in a condition of safety, and warranted to entertain the assurance of eternal happiness, unless he is holding fast the profession

of his faith without wavering,—unless he is continuing stedfast in the paths of new obedience, dying more and more unto sin, and living more and more unto righteousness.

The objection, about the tendency of this doctrine of the certain perseverance of believers to encourage them to live in carelessness and sin, on the ground that their eternal welfare has been secured, further assumes that believers,—men who have been brought, by God's almighty power, from darkness to light,—whose eyes have been opened to behold the glory of God in the face of His Son,—who have been led to see and feel that they are not their own, but bought with a price, even the precious blood of God's own Son,—are still wholly incapable of being influenced by any motives but those derived from a selfish and exclusive regard to their own safety and happiness. And even if we were to concede all this, and to descend, for the sake of argument, to the low moral level on which our opponents are accustomed to take their stand in discussing such questions, we could still present to believers sufficiently strong motives,—*addressed exclusively to their selfishness*,—to abstain from all sin, even without needing to urge that, by sinning, they would forfeit their eternal happiness; for our Confession teaches, in full accordance with the word of God, that though believers cannot totally and finally fall away, but shall certainly persevere and be saved, yet that “nevertheless they may, through the temptations of Satan and the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins; and for a time continue therein: whereby they incur God's displeasure, and grieve His Holy Spirit; come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts; have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded; hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves,”\*—a statement which is true, *in some measure*, of all the sins which believers commit, and not merely of the “grievous sins” into which they sometimes fall.

But we shall not dwell longer upon this topic, and proceed to notice the other points to which we referred,—namely, the scriptural evidence bearing directly and immediately upon this particular doctrine. Calvinists contend that this doctrine, besides being necessarily involved in, or clearly deducible from, the great

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\* C. xvii., s. iii.

truths which we have already considered and established, has its own proper, direct Scripture evidence, amply sufficient to establish it as a distinct and independent truth. They undertake to prove, by direct and appropriate Scripture evidence, the position that those who have been brought by faith and conversion into a state of grace, cannot finally fall away from it, but shall certainly persevere to the end, and be eternally saved; and if this can be proved as a distinct and independent truth, it manifestly tends very directly and very powerfully to confirm the whole of the leading principles of the Calvinistic theology,—to swell the mass of evidence by which Calvinism is proved to be indeed the doctrine of the word of God. Arminians, however, as we have intimated, profess to produce from Scripture direct proof of the falsehood of our doctrine of perseverance, which, as we formerly explained, they scarcely profess to do in regard to the doctrine of election; and, indeed, they rest very much upon the proof they adduce of the falsehood of our doctrine of perseverance as the leading *direct* scriptural evidence they have to bring forward against the whole Calvinistic system. We are quite willing to concede to them, that if they can really prove from Scripture that any men who have once believed and been born again have fallen away and finally perished, or that they may fall away and perish,—no certain and effectual provision having been made by God to prevent this,—the doctrine that God, out of His own good pleasure, elected some men to everlasting life, must be abandoned; for we will not undertake to defend Augustine's position, that some men who believed and were converted might fall, though none who were elected could do so.

The Scripture evidence which Arminians produce in opposition to our doctrine, and in support of their own, upon this subject of perseverance, is much stronger than what they have been able to bring forward on any other topic involved in this whole controversy; and it must, in fairness, be allowed to possess considerable plausibility. There are passages in Scripture, which, taken in their most obvious sense, do seem to imply that men who once believed and were converted did, or might, fall away and finally perish; and if these statements stood alone, they might, perhaps, be held sufficient to warrant the reception of this doctrine. We have, however, in Scripture, a large body of conclusive evidence in support of the doctrine of the certain perseverance of all be-



lievers,—evidence both direct and inferential,—evidence which cannot be answered and explained away,—evidence greatly superior in strength, extent, and explicitness, to any that can be adduced upon the other side. The proper question, of course, is, What is the doctrine which Scripture really teaches upon this subject, when we take into account the whole of the materials which it furnishes, and embody the united substance of them all, making due allowance for every position which it really sanctions? Now, Calvinists undertake to establish the following propositions upon this subject: first, that Scripture contains clear and conclusive evidence of the certain, final perseverance of all who have ever been united to Christ through faith, and have been born again of His word,—conclusive evidence that they shall never perish, but shall have eternal life; secondly, that there is no sufficient scriptural evidence to warrant a denial of this doctrine, or to establish the opposite one; and that there is no great difficulty—no great force or straining being required for the purpose—in showing that the passages on which the Arminians found, may be so explained as to be consistent with our doctrine; while it is impossible—without the most unwarrantable and unnatural force and straining—to reconcile with their doctrine the scriptural statements which we adduce in support of ours.

I cannot notice the body of scriptural proof, derived at once from great general principles and from numerous and explicit statements, bearing directly and immediately upon the point in dispute, by which our doctrine is conclusively established; but I may briefly advert to the way in which we dispose of the evidence which is adduced by the Arminians on the other side, and which, at first sight, possesses considerable plausibility. It consists, of course, in general, of statements which seem to assert directly, or by plain implication, that men who have been brought into a state of grace,—under the influence of true faith and genuine holiness,—have fallen, or may fall, away from it, and finally perish. Now, let it be remarked, what they are bound to prove in regard to any scriptural statements which they adduce for this purpose,—namely, first, that they clearly and necessarily imply that the persons spoken of were once true believers, had been really renewed in the spirit of their minds; and, secondly, that these persons did, or might, finally perish. They must prove *both* these positions; and, if they fail in proving either of them, their argument falls

to the ground. Both must be proved to apply, as matter of fact, or at least of undoubted actual possibility, to the very same persons. In regard to some of the passages they adduce, we undertake to show that *neither* of these positions can be established in regard to the persons of whom they speak; but this is not necessary to our argument. It is quite sufficient if we can show that no conclusive evidence has been adduced, *either* that these persons were ever true believers, or else that they did or could finally perish. When either of these positions has been established, we are entitled to set the passage aside, as wholly inadequate to serve the purpose of our opponents,—as presenting no real or even apparent inconsistency with our doctrine. And, in this way, many of the passages on which the Arminians base their denial of the doctrine of perseverance can be disposed of without difficulty.

There is, however, another class of passages from Scripture adduced by them, to which these considerations do not so directly apply. These are the warnings against apostasy, or falling away, addressed to believers, which, it is argued, imply a possibility of their falling away. Now, we do not deny that there is a sense in which *it is possible* for believers to fall away,—that is, when they are viewed simply in themselves,—with reference to their own powers and capacities,—and apart from God's purpose or design with respect to them. Turretine, in explaining the state of the question upon this point, says: “Non quæritur de *possibilitate deficiendi a parte hominis*, et in sensu diviso. Nemo enim negat fideles in se spectatos pro mutabilitate et infirmitate naturæ suæ, non tantùm deficere posse, sed nihil posse aliud sibi relictos, accedentibus imprimis Satanæ et mundi tentationibus. Sed *a parte Dei*, quoad ejus propositum, in sensu composito, et ratione ipsius eventus, quo sensû impossibilem dicimus eorum defectionem, non absolutè et simpliciter, sed hypotheticè et secundùm quid.”\* It is only in this sense—which we admit, and which is not inconsistent with our doctrine—that a possibility of falling away is indicated in the passages referred to; *their proper primary effect* evidently being just to bring out, in the most impressive way, the great principle of the invariableness of the connection which God has established between perseverance, as opposed to

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\* Loc. xv., Qu. xvi., s. iv., De Perseverantia Fidei.

apostasy, as a means, and salvation as an end; and thus to operate as a means of effecting the end which God has determined to accomplish,—of enabling believers to persevere, or preserving them from apostasy; and to effect this in entire accordance with the principles of their moral constitution, by producing constant humility, watchfulness, and diligence.

In regard to apparent cases of the actual final apostasy of believers occurring in the church, we have no difficulty in disposing of them. The impossibility of men knowing with certainty the character of their fellow-men individually, so as to be thoroughly assured that they are true believers, is too well established, both by the statements of Scripture and by the testimony of experience, to allow us to hesitate about confidently applying the principle of the apostle, which, indeed, furnishes a key to solve many of the difficulties of this whole subject: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us."\*

The impossibility of believers falling away totally does not so directly result from principles peculiarly Calvinistic, which bear rather upon falling away *finally*, but from scriptural views of regeneration and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and of the relation into which they have been brought to God and Christ. To adopt the language of the Westminster Confession, "This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free-will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ; the abiding of the Spirit, and of the seed of God within them; and the nature of the covenant of grace: from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof."†

*Sec. XV.—Socinianism—Arminianism—Calvinism.*

We have now completed the survey of the Arminian as well as the Socinian controversies; and in surveying these controversies, we have had occasion to direct attention to almost all the most important departments of Christian theology. Socinianism

\* 1 John ii. 19.

† C. xvii., sec. ii. For the practical application of the doctrines of Calvin-

ism, see "The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation," p. 525. (Edrs.)

is not only a denial of all that is most peculiar and fundamental in the system of revealed religion, but a positive assertion of a system of doctrine diametrically opposed to that which God has made known to us; while Arminianism is an attempt to set up a scheme intermediate between that which involves a rejection of almost all that the Bible was intended to teach, and the system of Calvinism, which alone corresponds with the scriptural views of the guilt, depravity, and helplessness of man,—of the sovereign supremacy and the all-sufficient efficacious agency of God,—the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,—in the accomplishment of his salvation. There are some general considerations naturally suggested by the survey we have taken of these three schemes of doctrine,—the Socinian, the Arminian, and the Calvinistic,—which seem fitted to assist us in forming a right estimate of the different views of the schemes of theology that have been maintained by men who all professed to believe in the divine authority of the sacred Scriptures. There are chiefly three considerations of this sort to which I would advert.

They are these: first, that in the scheme of Christian theology there is a class of doctrines which occupy a higher platform, or are possessed of greater intrinsic importance, than what are commonly called the peculiarities of Calvinism; secondly, that Arminianism, in its more Pelagian form, differs little, practically, from Socinianism, and would be more consistent if it were openly to deny the divinity and atonement of Christ, and the necessity of the special agency of the Holy Spirit; and, thirdly, that Arminianism, in its more evangelical form, besides being chargeable with important errors and defects, is inconsistent with itself, since the important scriptural truths which it embodies cannot be held consistently, except in connection with the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism. I shall merely make an observation or two in explanation of these three positions.

The first is, that, in the scheme of Christian theology, there is a class of doctrines which may be said to occupy a higher platform than what are commonly called the peculiarities of Calvinism. The doctrines here referred to are, of course, those taught by orthodox Lutherans and by evangelical Arminians, as well as by Calvinists, concerning the depravity of man by nature,—the person and work of Christ,—and the agency of the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration and sanctification. The Bible was given



us mainly to unfold to us the lost and ruined state of man by nature, and the existence, character, and operation of that provision which God has made for saving sinners. Everything which is taught in Scripture it is equally incumbent upon us, as a matter of duty or obligation, to believe, as every statement rests equally upon the authority of God. But there is a great difference, in point of intrinsic importance, among the many truths of different kinds and classes taught us in Scripture; and the general measure of their relative importance—though we are very incompetent to apply it, and should be very careful lest we misapply it—is just the directness and immediateness of the relation in which they stand towards that which we have described as the great leading object of revelation,—namely, making known the ruin and the recovery of mankind. The doctrines which directly and immediately unfold these topics occupy a position, in point of intrinsic importance, which is not shared by any others; and these doctrines are just those which tell us of the universal guilt and entire depravity of man,—of the sovereign mercy of God, in providing for men's salvation,—of the person and work of the Son, and the way in which His vicarious work bears upon the justification of sinners,—and of the operation of the Holy Spirit, in applying to men individually the benefits which Christ purchased for them, and preparing them for heaven, by producing faith in them, and by regenerating and sanctifying their natures.

Now, there can be no reasonable doubt that there have been, and that there are, men who have entertained views upon all these subjects, which we must admit to be scriptural and correct,—because, in the main, the same as we ourselves believe,—who yet have rejected the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism. The substance of what we assert is this,—that men who agree with us in holding scriptural views upon these points, while they reject the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism, do agree with us on subjects that are more important and fundamental, and that ought to occupy a more prominent place in the ordinary course of public instruction than those in which they differ from us. They hold the truth upon those points which it was the great leading object of revelation to teach us,—which bear most directly and immediately upon the exposition of the way of a sinner's salvation,—which ought to occupy the most frequent and the most prominent place in the preaching of the gospel,—and which God most commonly blesses

for the conversion of sinners. Their *consistency*, in holding scriptural doctrines upon these points, while they reject the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism, is not at present the question; that will be adverted to afterwards; the fact that they do hold them is undoubted, and it ought to be fully admitted and fairly estimated. It is not, indeed, strictly correct to say, that they hold purely scriptural views upon all these most important topics. We have had occasion, in regard to every one of them, to point out something erroneous, or at least defective, in their sentiments or impressions; and we have *often* asserted that everything, however apparently insignificant, which either transgresses or comes short of what Scripture teaches upon these points, is sinful and dangerous. Such, indeed, is the harmony subsisting among all the branches of scriptural doctrine, that truth or error in regard to any one of them almost unavoidably produces truth or error, in a greater or less degree, in regard to the rest,—that, in short, none but Calvinists hold views which are, *in all respects*, scriptural, in regard to any of the leading doctrines of Christianity. Still, the views of the men to whom we refer are, in regard to these fundamental points, accordant, in their main substance, with the teaching of Scripture; and their defects and errors come out chiefly when we enter into some of the more minute and detailed explanations as to the bearings and consequences of the particular doctrine, and the more distant and less obvious conclusions that may be deduced from it,—so that, in regard to almost any statement which we would make, in explaining our sentiments upon these points, for the purpose of practical instruction, they would fully agree with us. Arminius held some erroneous views upon the subject of justification, which his followers afterwards expanded into a subversion of the gospel method of salvation, and the establishment of justification by deeds of law. But he declared—and I have no doubt honestly—that he could subscribe to every statement in the chapter upon this subject in Calvin's Institutes. This, of course, affords no reason why anything that was really defective or erroneous in the sentiments of Arminius upon this point—however unimportant comparatively—should not be exposed and condemned; and still less does it afford any reason why we should not point out, in connection with this subject, the dangerous tendency of the admission of any error, however insignificant it may appear; but it surely affords good ground for the assertion, that

Arminius himself agreed with Calvin in regard to the main substance and essential principles of his doctrine of justification.

Similar remarks might be made in regard to the views even of the soundest and most evangelical Arminians,—with respect to original sin,—the nature of the atonement of Christ,—and the operation of the Spirit in renovating and sanctifying men's hearts; and, indeed, we have had occasion to point out the errors and defects of their views upon all these topics, and their tendency to lead to still greater deviations from sound doctrine. But while all this is the case, and should not be forgotten or overlooked, it is also true, that there are men who deny the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism, and may therefore be called Arminians, who would concur in the main substance and the essential principles of the doctrines which we believe to be taught in Scripture,—upon the depravity of human nature,—the person and work of Christ,—and the agency of the Holy Spirit in converting and sanctifying. And these are doctrines to which greater intrinsic importance attaches, than to those on which they differ from us; just because they bear more directly and immediately upon the great objects of revelation, theoretical and practical,—namely, the exposition of the way of salvation,—the development of the truths which God ordinarily employs as His instruments in the conversion of sinners. I have pointed out, in the course of our discussions, all the defects and errors of Arminianism, even in its most evangelical form, as plainly and explicitly as I could, and with at least enough of keenness and severity; but I would like also to point out the extent to which the soundest portion of those who reject the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism agree with us in our views of Christian theology, and to realize the paramount importance of the doctrines in regard to which this agreement is exhibited, and the special prominence to which they are entitled.

Secondly: The second observation which I wish to make is this, ---that Arminianism, in its more Pelagian form, is practically little better than Socinianism, and would be more consistent if it renounced a profession of those doctrines concerning the person and work of Christ, and the agency of the Spirit, by which it appears to be distinguished from Socinianism. The Pelagian Arminians profess to believe in the divinity and atonement of Christ, and in the agency of the Spirit; but they practically *omit* these doctrines, or leave them wholly in the background, in the

representations they usually give of the general substance and spirit of revealed truth, and of the way in which it bears upon the condition and character of men. Their ordinary views and sentiments upon the subject of the true nature and design of Christianity, and the representations they commonly give of it for the instruction and guidance of others, are scarcely affected, to any material extent, by their professed belief in the divinity and atonement of Christ, and in the agency of the Spirit. These doctrines with them are mere words, which have no real value or significance, and might, to all practical purposes, be just as well discarded. The cause of this is to be found mainly in the extent to which they have denied and corrupted the scriptural doctrine concerning the guilt and depravity of man, and his consequent inability to save himself, or to do anything that is really fitted to effect his own salvation. Their radically erroneous views upon this subject lead them practically to regard the atoning work of Christ and the regenerating work of the Spirit as unnecessary, —there being really no adequate object to be accomplished by such peculiar and extraordinary provisions. The merits of Christ and the assistance of the Spirit, are, with such persons, little or nothing more than mere words, introduced merely as if to round off a sentence, and to keep up some show of admitting the great features of the Christian revelation; while, practically and substantially, the general strain of their representations of Christianity seems plainly to imply,—either, that man does not need anything that can be called salvation,—or, that whatever he may need in this matter he is able to effect or provide for himself. This is just practically Socinianism; and it is the form in which Socinianism—or a rejection of all that is peculiar and fundamental in Christianity—commonly appears among the mass of irreligious and careless men, living in a community where an open and formal denial of the divinity and atonement of Christ might subject them to some inconvenience or disapprobation.

The work of Christ *for* men, and the work of the Spirit *in* men,—rendered necessary by their natural condition of guilt, and depravity, and helplessness, if they are to be saved, and indispensable to their salvation,—constitute the essential features of the Christian system, as revealed in the Bible. The Socinians openly and formally deny these fundamental principles; and the Pelagian Arminians, while admitting them in words, deprive them



of all real significance and value, by leaving them out in all their practical views and impressions, in regard to the way and manner in which sinners are saved. This was the sort of theology that prevailed very extensively in the Established Churches of this country during a large part of last century; and it is sure always to prevail wherever true personal religion has been in a great measure extinguished,—where the ministry is taken up as a mere trade,—and where men press into the priest's office for a bit of bread. Among such persons, the question, whether they shall retain or abandon a profession, in words, of the divinity and atonement of Christ, and of the personality and agency of the Holy Spirit, is determined more by their circumstances than by their convictions,—more by their courage than by their conscience. And it signifies little, comparatively, how this question is decided; for, whether they retain or abandon a profession, in words, of these great doctrines, they fundamentally corrupt the gospel of the grace of God, and wholly misrepresent the way of salvation.

This Pelagian form of Arminianism is usually found in connection with everything that is cold, meagre, and lifeless in practical religion,—in personal character,—or effort for the spiritual good of others. This, however, has not been *always* and universally the case; and we have had in our day, and among ourselves, a grossly Pelagian Arminianism, which manifested for a time a considerable measure of active and ardent zeal. These persons—popularly known by the name of Morrisonians—professed to have found out a great specific for the more rapid and extensive conversion of sinners; and they employed it with considerable zeal and activity, and with loud boastings of its extraordinary success. But their plan is as old at least as the time of Pelagius; for in itself it really differs in no material respect from that which he propounded, and which Augustine overthrew from the word of God. Pelagius did not deny either the atonement of Christ or the agency of the Spirit; but he practically left them out, or explained them very much away. And so it is with these modern heretics. The atonement, with them, is reduced to being little or nothing else practically,—however they may sometimes exalt it in words,—than a mere exhibition and proof of God's love to men, fitted and intended to impress upon us the conviction that He is ready and willing to forgive; and it is supposed to operate mainly by impressing this conviction, and thereby persuading us to turn to

Him; while the view they give of man's natural power to believe the gospel,—to repent and turn to God, or—what is virtually the same thing, in a somewhat more scriptural dress—a so-called gracious assistance of the Spirit, imparted equally, or at least sufficiently, to all men,—contradicts the plain doctrine of Scripture concerning the depravity of human nature, and practically supersedes the necessity of the special, efficacious agency of the Holy Spirit in the production of faith and conversion. The system, in short, is manifestly Arminianism in its most Pelagian form; and though accompanied in this case with much zeal and activity,—while Pelagianism has been more usually accompanied with coldness or apathy,—this does not affect the true character and tendency of the scheme of doctrine taught; while the character of that doctrine, judged of both by the testimony of Scripture and the history of the church, warrants us in regarding with great distrust the conversions which they profess to be making, and to cherish the suspicion that many are likely to prove like the stony-ground hearers, who had no root, who endured for a time, and then withered away.

Before leaving this general consideration, I would like to point out the lesson which it is fitted to teach as to the important influence which men's views about the guilt and depravity of human nature exert upon their whole conceptions of the scheme of divine truth, and the consequent necessity of rightly understanding that great doctrine, and being familiar with the scriptural grounds on which it rests. If doctrines so important and so peculiar in their character as the atonement of Christ and the special agency of the Spirit are admitted as true,—and we have not charged the Pelagian Arminians with conscious hypocrisy in professing to believe them,—it might be expected that they would exert a most extensive and pervading influence upon men's whole views of the scheme of divine truth, and the way of a sinner's salvation; and yet we see it abundantly established in the history of the church, that ignorance of the great doctrine of the universal guilt and entire depravity of men neutralizes practically all their influence, and leads those who admit their truth to conceive and represent the Christian system very much in the same way in which it is exhibited by those who believe Christ to be a mere man, and the Holy Ghost to have no existence. There are various gradations among Arminians,—as I have had occasion to point out,—from

those who, in these important doctrines, substantially agree with Calvinists, down to those who differ little from the Socinians; but of all these various gradations, the distinguishing characteristic,—the testing measure,—may be said to be the degree in which the views of the different parties deviate from the doctrine of Scripture in regard to the universal guilt and entire depravity of man by nature,—the real feature in his actual condition which rendered necessary, if he was to be saved, a special interposition of God's mercy,—the vicarious sufferings and death of His only-begotten Son,—and the effusion of His Holy Spirit.

Thirdly: Our third and last observation was, that Arminianism, in its more evangelical form,—besides being marked by important errors and defects,—is chargeable with inconsistency, inasmuch as the fundamental scriptural truths which it embodies can be held *consistently* only in connection with the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism. It is chiefly in Wesleyan Methodism that we have this more evangelical form of Arminianism presented to our contemplation; and it is—as I have had occasion to mention—in Richard Watson's Theological Institutes that we have this view of the scheme of Christian theology most fully and systematically developed,—corresponding, in almost every respect, with that taught by Arminius himself. The errors of the system are, of course, chiefly the denial of the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism; and the defects, additional to the errors, are principally those shortcomings in the bringing out of the whole doctrine of Scripture, even in regard to those points on which, in the main, they agree with Calvinists, to which I referred under the first observation. Their inconsistency lies in this, that they admit either too much truth, or too little. They concede, on the one hand, what ought, in consistency, to drag them down to Pelagianism; and they concede, on the other, what ought, in consistency, to raise them up to Calvinism. And the worst feature of the case is, that the testimony of Scripture and the voice of experience concur in declaring that, in such a position, the tendencies downwards are commonly more powerful than the tendencies upwards. The Wesleyan Methodists have hitherto maintained at once a denial of Calvinism and a denial of Pelagianism. They have hitherto continued stedfast to views, in the main, sound and scriptural in regard to the depravity of man, the nature of the atonement, and the work of the Spirit in regeneration; and there can be no reasonable doubt that, in the

proclamation of these great scriptural doctrines, both at home and abroad, God has been pleased to honour them with a large measure of success in the conversion of sinners.

But no church has ever continued long in this intermediate position; and the probability is, that they too will manifest a tendency towards one or other of the two extremes. It is earnestly to be hoped that it may be that one which will enable them to retain all the scriptural truth they at present hold, and to bring it out more completely and consistently than they now do. They are accustomed to admit that Calvinism has been always held in combination with a great deal of important scriptural truth; and they are anxious to separate this truth from what they are fond of calling the peculiarities of Calvinism,—which they sometimes represent as of no great importance,—and which they profess to dislike chiefly as neutralizing or obstructing the operation and effect of the truth which they and Calvinists hold in common. We do not deny that they hold many important fundamental truths, or that the truths in which they agree with us are more important than those in which they differ from us. But we hold that what they call the peculiarities of Calvinism are very important truths,—essential to a *full* and *complete* exposition of the scheme of Christian doctrine,—to an exact and accurate development of the whole plan of salvation; and, more particularly,—for this is the only point we can at present advert to,—that they do not follow out, fully and consistently, the scriptural truths which they hold, and that, if they did, this would certainly land them in an admission of all the fundamental principles of Calvinism.

I do not now enter into an illustration of this position. The materials for illustrating it have been furnished in the examination of the different doctrines controverted between the Calvinists and the Arminians. In the course of this examination, we have repeatedly had occasion to show that the point in dispute really turned practically upon this question,—Whether God or man was the cause or the author of man's salvation. Socinians ascribe man's salvation—that is, everything needful for securing his eternal happiness—to man himself; Calvinists, to God; while Arminians ascribe it partly to the one and partly to the other,—the more Pelagian section of them ascribing so much to man, as practically to leave nothing to God; and the more evangelical section of them *professing* to ascribe it, like the Calvinists, wholly to God,



but—by their denial of the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism—refusing to follow out this great principle fully, and to apply it, distinctly and consistently, to the various departments of the scheme of divine truth. They do this commonly under a vague impression, that, when this great principle is followed out and exhibited, distinctly and definitely, in the particular doctrines of Calvinism, it involves results inconsistent with the free agency and responsibility of man,—just as if the creature ever could become independent of the Creator,—and as if God could not accomplish all His purposes in and by His creatures, without violating the principles of their constitution. All men who have ever furnished satisfactory evidence, in their character and conduct, of being under the influence of genuine piety, have not only professed, but believed, that the salvation of sinners is to be ascribed to the sovereign mercy of God,—that man can do nothing effectual, in the exercise of his own natural powers, for escaping from his natural condition of guilt and depravity,—and must be indebted for this wholly to the free grace of God, the vicarious work of Christ, and the efficacious agency of the Spirit. Now, Calvinism is really nothing but just giving a distinct and definite expression and embodiment to these great principles,—applying clear and precise ideas of them to each branch of the scheme of salvation; while every other system of theology embodies doctrines which either plainly and palpably contradict or exclude them, or at least throw them into the background, and involve them in indefiniteness or obscurity, which can generally be shown to resolve ultimately into a contradiction or denial of them.

Evangelical Arminians profess to believe in the utter helplessness and moral impotency of man by nature to anything spiritually good. This great principle finds its full and accurate expression only in the doctrine of original sin, as explained and applied by Calvinists; while even the soundest Arminians usually find it necessary to introduce some vague and ill-defined limitation or modification, which they are not able very clearly to explain, of the universal and entire guilt and depravity of man. They all admit something which they call the sovereignty of divine grace in the salvation of sinners; and by the admission of this, they *intend* to deprive men of all ground of boasting, and to give God the whole glory of their salvation. But if the peculiar principles of Calvinism are denied, the sovereignty of God in determining the everlasting

salvation of sinners is reduced to a mere name, without a corresponding reality; and whatever professions may be made, and whatever may be the intentions and feelings of the parties making them, the salvation of those who are saved is not determined by God, but by men themselves,—God merely foreseeing what they will, in point of fact, do, and regulating His plans and His conduct accordingly. Evangelical Arminians profess to ascribe to the agency of the Spirit the production of faith and regeneration in men individually; and seem to exclude, as Calvinists do, the co-operation of man in the exercise of his natural powers in the origin or commencement of the great spiritual change which is indispensable to salvation. But whatever they may hold, or think they hold, upon this point, they cannot consistently—without renouncing their Arminianism, and admitting the peculiar principles of Calvinism—make the agency of the Spirit the real, determining, efficacious cause of the introduction of spiritual life into the soul; and must ascribe, in some way or other,—palpably or obscurely,—some co-operation to man himself, even in the commencement of this work. And if the commencement of the work be God's, in such a sense that His agency is the determining and certainly efficacious cause of its being effected in every instance, then this necessarily implies the exercise of His sovereignty in the matter in a much higher and more definite sense than any in which Arminians can ever ascribe it to Him. It is not disputed that, whatever God does in time, He decreed or resolved to do from eternity; and, *therefore*, men, in consistency, must either deny that God does this,—that the agency of His Spirit is the cause of the implantation of spiritual life,—of the commencement of the process which leads to the production of faith and regeneration *in any other sense* than as a mere partial concurring cause co-operating with man,—or else they must admit all the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism in regard to grace and predestination.

It is not, then, to be wondered at, that, as we lately remarked, some of the most eminent divines in Germany have recently been led to see and admit the inconsistency of the denial of Calvinism with the admission of the scriptural doctrine of the Lutheran symbols in regard to depravity, regeneration, and the work of the Spirit; and that some of them have been led, though apparently chiefly upon the ground of consistent philosophical speculation, to take the side of Calvinism. And there are few things more

earnestly to be desired, with a view to the promotion of sound doctrine and true religion in our own land, than that the Wesleyan Methodists should come to see the inconsistency in which their peculiar doctrines upon these points involves them; and be led to adopt, fully and consistently, the only scheme of theology which gives full and definite expression and ample scope to all those great principles which all men of true piety profess to hold, and in some sense do hold, and which alone fully exhibits and secures the glory of the grace of God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—in the salvation of sinful men.\*

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\* Knapp's Lectures on Christian Theology, pp. 116 and 411; (Wood's Notes). Hagenbach's History of Doc- trines, vol. ii., pp. 448-52. Wegscheider's "Institutiones," pp. 466-483.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

#### *Sec. I.—Presbyterianism.*

THE leading general questions which have been broached in connection with the subject of church government are these :—Is the ordinary administration of the affairs of the church vested in the body of the members of the church, collectively and indiscriminately, or in a select number, who, in virtue of their office, are invested with a certain measure of authority in the management of ecclesiastical affairs, and of control over the ordinary members of the church? And if the latter be the truth,—as the Reformers in general believed it to be,—then such questions as these naturally arise: What are the different classes or divisions of the office-bearers of the church, and what are their different functions respectively? Are there any of them priests, possessed of a proper priestly character, and entitled to execute priestly functions? Is there any divinely-sanctioned class of functionaries in the church superior to the ordinary pastors of congregations? And if not, is there any other class of office-bearers, in some respect inferior to them, but entitled to take part along with them in the government of the church? Most of these questions were fully investigated and discussed at the period of the Reformation, and were then settled on grounds which have ever since commended themselves to the great body of the Reformed churches. With a partial exception,—to be afterwards noticed,—in the case of Luther, the Reformers generally held that the ordinary right of administering the affairs of the church was vested, not in the body of the members, but in select office-bearers.

Most of them held that the church, collectively,—which they usually defined to be *coetus fidelium*,—was vested by Christ with such entire self-sufficiency, such full intrinsic capacity with respect to everything external, for the attainment of its own ends and the



promotion of its own welfare by means of His ordinances, as to be entitled, in extraordinary emergencies, to do *anything*, however ordinarily irregular, that might be necessary to secure these results. This is the great general principle that is indicated in our Confession of Faith, when it lays down the position, that, "to the catholic visible church, consisting of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion, together with their children, Christ has given the ministry, the oracles, and the ordinances of God." The Reformers made use of this important principle to defend, against the Romanists, the validity of their own vocation to the ordinary work of the ministry, and the special work of reformation. But they did not regard it as at all inconsistent with the following truths, which they also generally maintained, as founded upon the word of God,—namely, that the church is bound, as well as entitled, to have office-bearers, and just the kinds and classes of office-bearers which are sanctioned by the sacred Scripture; that Scripture contains plain enough indications as to the way in which these office-bearers should be appointed and established,—indications which should be implicitly followed as far as possible, and in all ordinary circumstances; and that these office-bearers, so appointed and established, become, in virtue of their office, vested with authority to administer the ordinary government of the church, subject to no other jurisdiction or authoritative control than that of Christ Himself speaking in His word.

The Church of Rome had extensively corrupted the teaching of Scripture in regard to the government of the church as a society, no less than in regard to the great principles that determine the salvation of men individually. The leading features of the Romish system of government, which the Reformers assailed upon Scripture grounds, may be comprehended under the heads of the Priesthood, the Papacy, and the Prelacy. By the priesthood, we mean the ascription of a proper priestly character, and the exercise of proper priestly functions, to some of the ecclesiastical office-bearers; or, in substance, what is sometimes discussed in the present day under the name of the *hierarchical principle*. The leading considerations that demonstrate the anti-scriptural and dangerous character of this principle, we have already had occasion to advert to, in discussing the sacramental principle. The Papacy and the Prelacy,—the supremacy of the Pope and the authority of diocesan bishops,—we considered in our former discussions. At

present we can give only a few historical notices of the way in which they were discussed at the period of the Reformation, and of the use that has since been made of the discussion which they then received.

The Romanists contend that the government of the church, as settled by Christ, is monarchical,—one supreme ruler being set over the whole church, and being, *jure divino*, invested with the highest authority in the regulation of all its affairs. There is, indeed, a difference of opinion among Romanists themselves—and the point has never been settled by any authority to which all Romanists yield submission—upon this important question, Whether this supreme ruler of the church is, *de jure*, an absolute or a limited monarch,—some of them contending that the Pope has unlimited power of legislation and jurisdiction, and that all other ecclesiastical functionaries are merely his delegates, deriving their authority from him, and wholly subject to his control in the execution of all their functions; while others maintain that even the Pope is subject to the jurisdiction of a general council, and bound to regulate his decisions by the canons of the church,—and allege, moreover, that bishops derive their authority from Christ, and not from the Pope, though they are subject, under certain limitations, to his control in the ordinary execution of their functions. Still all Romanists acknowledge that the Pope is the supreme ruler and universal monarch of the church, while they vest the ordinary administration of the affairs of particular churches in bishops, as a distinct order from presbyters or ordinary pastors,—ascribing to them—when they are assembled in a general council, and thus represent, as they say, the universal church—the privilege of infallibility.

Luther first discovered that the Pope has no right to govern the church *jure divino*; and then, as he proceeded with his investigations, he found out that the Pope has no good right to the crown and the sceptre as monarch of the church even *jure humano*. As he continued to study the word of God, he was soon led to see that there is no warrant in Scripture for “those falsely denominated bishops,”—to use his own language in the title of one of his treatises,—and became convinced that ordinary presbyters or pastors are fully competent to the execution of all the functions which are necessary in discharging all the ordinary duties, and in carrying on the ordinary operations, of a church of Christ. Neither Luther, however, nor his more immediate followers,

directed much attention to the formation of a scriptural system of church government. Indeed, Luther\* seemed at one time to have perverted and misapplied the scriptural principle, that all believers are in some sense priests, and to have deduced from this principle the conclusion, that believers indiscriminately had a right to administer all God's ordinances, and to take part in regulating all the affairs of His church,—the appointment and setting apart of individuals to labour in what are usually reckoned the functions of the ministry being regarded by him, at that period, rather as a matter of convenience, suggested by the obvious advantages of the plan, than as a matter of necessary scriptural arrangement. He came afterwards, however, to see more clearly the scriptural authority of a standing ministry, and of fixed office-bearers as distinguished from the ordinary members of the church; but he and his followers continued, as I have explained, to have rather loose views of the necessity of positive scriptural warrant for everything that might be established as a part of the ordinary government and worship of the church, and ascribed to the church itself a certain discretionary power of regulating these matters as might seem best and most expedient at the time. Luther himself never held or claimed any higher office than that of a presbyter; and yet he considered himself entitled to execute, and did execute, all the functions necessary for conducting the ordinary operations of a church of Christ, and preserving a succession in the ministry. Nay, on one or two occasions, he assumed and exercised the authority of ordaining a bishop or prelate,†—that is, of investing a man with a certain measure of control over other pastors; and some Prelatic controversialists, in their eagerness to get some countenance from the Reformers, have been rash and inconsiderate enough to appeal to this fact as a proof that Luther held their principles, while, indeed, it proves the very reverse. It is very certain that no mere presbyter, *who held Prelatic principles*, would have assumed to himself the power of making a bishop, as the assumption and exercise of such a power by a presbyter plainly

\* Luther, *De instituendis ministris Ecclesiæ*, published in 1523; *Opera*, tom. ii. Ed. 1557. Bellarmin., *De Sacramentis*, Lib. i., c. xxv., tom. iii., p. 44. Ed. 1615.

† Brown, on Puseyite Episcopacy

(p. 249), refers for proof of Luther's ordination of two bishops to Melchior Adams' "*Vitæ German. Theolog.*," p. 150, and Seekendorf, "*De Lutheranismis*," Lib. iii., p. 392.

involves an explicit denial of the scriptural authority of the episcopate *as a distinct and higher order*; and the denial or assertion of this embodies, as I have repeatedly had occasion to explain, the true *status quæstionis* in the controversy between Presbyterians and Prelatists. Luther's conduct upon the occasion referred to certainly proves that he did not think it to be positively sinful, or even unlawful, for one pastor to be invested by common consent, when particular circumstances seemed to render it expedient, with a certain measure of control over other pastors. It proves this, but nothing more; while his conduct upon that occasion, the whole tenor of his life and history, and the express statements contained in his writings, all concur in proving that he held, in common with all the other Reformers, that the episcopate, as a permanent, necessary order of functionaries in the church, has no warrant or authority in Scripture.

It is to Calvin, however, that we are indebted for the fullest and most accurate exposition of the scriptural scheme of government, as well as of the scriptural system of doctrine. His leading principles were these: That a separate ministry is a standing ordinance appointed by God, provision being made in His word for preserving and perpetuating it in the church in a regular manner; and that ministers who have been duly and regularly set apart to the work are alone warranted, in all ordinary circumstances, to administer God's ordinances of public preaching and the sacraments; that presbyters, or ordinary pastors of congregations, are fully authorized to discharge all the ordinary duties necessary in the administration of the affairs of the church,—including, of course, the ordination of other pastors; that the episcopate, as a permanent necessary institution, is wholly unsanctioned by Scripture, and is therefore, upon principles formerly explained, by plain implication forbidden; and, finally, that a distinction between the office-bearers and the ordinary members of the church is established by Scripture, and ought to be permanently observed, while, at the same time, the power of ruling in the church, or presiding in the administration of its affairs, as connected with the holding of office, is not limited to pastors as the authorized administrators of solemn ordinances, but ought to be exercised by them in common with the office-bearers duly chosen and set apart for that purpose. It was chiefly in denying the lawfulness of the assumed jurisdiction of the Pope and of



bishops, and in asserting the parity of all ministers of the word or pastors of flocks, and the propriety of others, not pastors, taking part along with them in the administration of the ordinary affairs of the church, that Calvin set himself in opposition to the scheme of ecclesiastical government that existed in the Church of Rome. And his doctrines upon these subjects were adopted, and in substance acted upon, by almost all the Reformers, and in almost all the churches of the Reformation, with the limitation which has been already explained in the case of the Lutheran churches, and with a somewhat similar, though rather greater, limitation in the case of the Church of England.\* I cannot at present enter upon an exposition of the scriptural grounds by which Calvin's scheme of church government can be established, but must content myself with adverting to a few historical circumstances connected with the discussions to which it has given rise.

As the whole Popish scheme of church government, including the offices and functions of popes and prelates, was assailed by the Reformers, this subject came under discussion in the Council of Trent, which was held for the professed purpose of giving an authoritative and infallible decision upon all the various questions raised by the Reformers; and in the proceedings of the council, and, indeed, in Popish works generally, it is taken up, so far at least as Prelacy is concerned, under the head of the "Sacrament of order."† On this, as on many other subjects, there were considerable differences of opinion among the members of the council, and great difficulty was experienced in drawing up the decrees. A very interesting account of these difficulties, of the discussions and intrigues to which they gave rise, and of the views of the different parties concerned in them, is to be found in the seventh book of Father Paul's History of the Council of Trent. The leading points decided by the council in their decrees and canons upon the sacrament of order, so far as we are at present concerned with them, are these: that there is a proper visible priesthood under the New Testament, or a distinct body of men who are truly and properly priests, and whose special characteristic is, that they have the right to consecrate and offer the true body and blood of the Lord, and of retaining and remitting sins; that

\* *Vide* Bunsen's ridiculously erroneous account of the general character of the views of Luther and

Calvin on this subject, in his "Church of the Future."  
† Sess. xxiii.

there are other orders of clergy in the church besides the priesthood, both major and minor, through the latter of which men rise to the priesthood; that there is a hierarchy appointed by divine ordination, consisting of bishops, presbyters, and deacons; and that bishops are superior to presbyters, and have the exclusive power of confirming and ordaining. This is the substance of the authorized doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject, as settled by the Council of Trent; and it will be observed that, in addition to what is peculiar to Romanists, it contains an explicit assertion of the leading distinguishing principles of Prelatists,—indeed, a much fuller and more explicit assertion of Prelatic principles than has ever been given by the Church of England. It is true that there was much discussion in the Council of Trent upon the question, whether the superiority of bishops over presbyters, at least as to the *potestas jurisdictionis*, was *jure divino* or not; and that, through the strenuous exertions of the Pope and his creatures, the council abstained from declaring formally and expressly that it was. As some Episcopalian controversialists endeavour to draw from this circumstance a presumption in favour of their views, and as the fact itself is curious, it may be proper to give some explanation of it.

Presbyterians have been accustomed to assert that the views and practice of Episcopalians upon the subject of the hierarchy are the same as those of the Church of Rome, and to regard this, *when combined with the fact that they were rejected by the great body of the Reformers*, as a strong presumption against their truth. That the views of Prelatists are identical with those of the Church of Rome, is too plain to admit of any doubt; for what is Prelacy, *as a doctrine*, but just the maintaining that the hierarchy consists of three distinct orders,—bishops, presbyters, and deacons,—and that bishops are superior to presbyters, being possessed of the exclusive power of confirming and ordaining? And all this is explicitly asserted, *totidem verbis*, by the Council of Trent as the doctrine of the Church of Rome. Prelatists, indeed, do not regard confirmation and ordination *as sacraments*, as the Church of Rome does; but they agree with Romanists in holding that the administration of both these ceremonies forms a necessary part of the ordinary business of the church, and one which cannot be transacted by presbyters, but only by bishops. But notwithstanding this clear and full accord-

ance, some Prelatists have alleged that the Church of Rome is no friend to Prelacy, and have brought forward the fact already referred to in proof of this. Now, it is quite plain that no such fact as this can in the least invalidate or neutralize the manifest accordance between the decisions adopted and promulgated by the Council of Trent, and the principle held by Prelatists,—especially as it is certain that all Popish writers, ever since the Council of Trent, have been zealous supporters of the leading views for which Prelatists, as such, contend.

There were two causes, of very different kinds, that produced division and disputation in the preliminary discussions in the Council of Trent on the subject of the *jus divinum* of the superiority of bishops over presbyters. As there were a few men in the council who seem to have honestly held scriptural views upon the subject of justification and predestination, so there appear to have been some who honestly doubted whether the superiority of bishops over presbyters, as a distinct higher order of functionaries, could be fully established from Scripture or the traditions of the early church. It was openly asserted by one of the most eminent theologians of the council, that not *Ærius* alone, as Prelatists commonly allege, but also that *Jerome*, *Ambrose*, *Augustine*, *Sedulius*, *Primasius*, *Chrysostom*, *Theodoret*, *Cæcumenius*, and *Theophylact*,—all of them eminent fathers,—had maintained, more or less explicitly, the identity of bishops and presbyters. Many plain traces and testimonies of this original identity were to be found, as Presbyterians have often proved, down till the period of the Reformation. It may be sufficient, as a specimen of this, to refer to the important facts, that the original identity of bishop and presbyter is expressly asserted both in the Decree of *Gratian*, and in the Sentences of *P. Lombard*, who both flourished in the twelfth century,—the one the great oracle of the Church of Rome in canon law, and the other in theology. It is a curious indication of the same general state of sentiment, combined with the results of the revised study of the Scriptures, that in the books put forth by public authority in England, in the reign of *Henry VIII.*, and under the superintendence of *Archbishop Cranmer*,—after the authority of the Church of Rome had been thrown off, but before the Protestant system was very well understood,—it should be declared that the New Testament makes explicit mention only of

two orders of ecclesiastical office-bearers,—namely, presbyters and deacons.\* Prelacy had universally prevailed for many centuries in the Church of Rome; but a latent and probably unconscious regard to scriptural authority and early tradition had still so much influence, that some eminent writers, of almost all periods down till the Reformation, were disposed to look upon the episcopate and the presbyterate not as two distinct orders, but merely as two different degrees (*gradus*) in one and the same order, and to regard the great difference between them, which was exhibited in the actual government of the church, as based only upon comparatively modern practice and ecclesiastical law,—views, in substance, the same as those held by the generality of the English Reformers.

The classification of the different orders of the clergy still common, or rather universal, among Romish writers, may be fairly regarded as affording a sort of involuntary and unintentional testimony to the same general idea. When it is found that Romish writers make no fewer than seven different orders of clergy,—all of them *clerici*, as distinguished from *laici*; some authorities, like Bellarmine, making the ordination of each distinct order a sacrament,—it might, perhaps, not unnaturally be supposed, that these seven orders are popes, cardinals, patriarchs, archbishops, bishops, presbyters, and deacons. This, however, would be an entire mistake. The priesthood is the highest of the seven orders of clergy, and comprehends presbyters and bishops, and all the various ranks above them. The other six orders of the clergy are all inferior to the priesthood, and go down through the various gradations of deacons, sub-deacons, acolytes, exorcists, and readers, to doorkeepers (*ostiarii*) inclusive. Now, this universal practice of the Romish writers in making the priesthood or presbyterate the highest of the seven orders of clergy, may be fairly regarded as something like an unintentional admission of there being some foundation in Scripture and primitive antiquity for the great doctrine of the Reformers upon this subject,—namely, that presbyters, or pastors, are really competent to execute all, even the highest, functions necessary in the ordinary business of the church. And there is no reason whatever why we may not legitimately attach some weight, in this as in other matters,

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\* Boyse's Account of Ancient Episcopacy, c. i.



even to the faint indications of primitive doctrine and practice preserved in the Church of Rome,—indications which are just entitled to the more weight, because they point to a state of things opposed to what is now, and has long been, the authorized doctrine and practice of the church which has preserved them.

The few more honest men, however, who were somewhat influenced by these considerations, would not have been able to have thrown any serious difficulty in the way of the Council of Trent deciding more fully and explicitly in favour of the *jus divinum* of Prelacy, more than the few men who held sounder views upon other points were able to prevent the council from condemning them, had not another influence come into play. Those members of the council, chiefly Spanish bishops, joined afterwards by a few French ones, who pressed for an explicit decision in favour of the *jus divinum* of Prelacy, were men who were anxious to see a thorough reformation of abuses,—disposed to curb the power of the Pope,—and likely to employ whatever authority might be assigned to bishops in prosecuting objects, and in effecting results, to which the Pope was decidedly opposed. This, of course, was quite a sufficient reason why he should resist a formal declaration of the *jus divinum* of the episcopate, in order, if possible, to keep the bishops more dependent upon his own control in the ordinary execution of their functions. And this result, accordingly, was effected by a vigorous application of the ordinary system of fraud, intrigue, and intimidation, by which, in almost every instance, the Court of Rome contrived to manage the council at its discretion, and at least to prevent the adoption of any deliverance to which it was opposed.

It ought to be observed, also, what was the exact position taken by the generality of those in the council who opposed a formal declaration of the *jus divinum* of Prelacy. They did not deny the *jus divinum* of a superior *potestas ordinis*,—that the episcopate, in general, as a distinct superior office or class of functionaries, rested upon a *jus divinum*,—but merely that individual bishops held their office, and possessed an inherent right to execute all its functions, *jure divino*. The office of a bishop or prelate, they admitted, was established by Christ, and could not be abrogated or abolished even by the Pope; but they contended that each individual holding the office derived his personal authority from the Pope, and was wholly subject to his control in the exe-

cution of his functions,—that he held this *jure pontificis*, and not *jure divino*. Now, all this might be held without affecting the fundamental principle of Prelacy,—without leading to a denial of the *jus divinum* of Prelacy in the sense in which it forms a subject of controversy between Presbyterians and high church Prelatists. The Pope did not urge the council to decide explicitly in favour of his view upon the point, and contented himself with preventing an explicit denial of it.

This is the whole history of the matter, and it is plainly quite inadequate to serve the purpose for which it is sometimes adduced by Episcopalian controversialists. It remains unquestionably true, that the Church of Rome holds, as a fundamental part of her system of church government,—which she maintained in opposition to the scriptural arguments of the Reformers,—all the leading principles of Prelacy, and that she has asserted them much more fully and explicitly than the Church of England has ever done. The Council of Trent has established it as an article of faith, that bishops are superior to presbyters, and possess the exclusive power of confirming and ordaining; while the utmost length which the Church of England has ventured to go on the subject, is exhibited in the following declaration, contained in the Preface to the Ordinal: “It is evident unto all men, diligently reading holy Scripture and ancient authors, that from the apostles’ time there have been these orders of ministers in Christ’s church,—Bishops, Priests, and Deacons.” Now, this declaration is very vague and ambiguous. It contains no explicit assertion of the superiority of bishops over presbyters, as a distinct higher order. It assigns to bishops no peculiar functions necessary in the ordinary administration of the affairs of the church, which presbyters are incompetent to perform. It does not assert that these orders existed *in* the apostles’ time, but only that they existed *from* the apostles’ time; and the general reference to the holy Scripture, as concurring with ancient authors in affording materials for establishing the general conclusion of the existence of these orders as a matter of fact, is very far from amounting to an assertion of a proper *jus divinum* in favour of each of the orders, as distinct from the others. This is the only thing like a doctrinal deliverance the Church of England has ever given on the subject of Prelacy,—the great distinctive feature of its form of government,—and it comes far short, in point of clearness and

fulness, of that given by the Council of Trent. The cause of this great vagueness and ambiguity in the only thing like a doctrinal deliverance the Church of England has ever given on the subject of Prelacy, is the same in substance as that which prevented the Council of Trent from explicitly deciding in favour of the *jus divinum* of the superiority of bishops over presbyters, in the sense in which we have explained it. The leading men connected with the reformation of the Church of England did not believe or maintain the *jus divinum* of Prelacy. The original defenders of the Prelacy of the Church of England took, on this subject, much the same ground as they did in vindicating the rites and ceremonies which they retained,—namely, that there was nothing unlawful or sinful about it, and that when it was established by the concurrence of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities it was right to submit to it. There is then, at least, as good ground for alleging of the Church of England as of the Church of Rome, that it is no good friend to Prelacy; and it is hopeless for Prelatists to escape, by this or by any other process, from the odium of concurring in the doctrine and practice of the great apostasy upon this subject.

It is not enough, however, as we have had occasion to explain, to warrant us in designating any doctrine or practice as Popish, in any sense which affords a legitimate presumption against its truth, unless we can show that, besides being taught and maintained by the Church of Rome, it was always condemned and rejected by the great body of those whom, at the era of the Reformation, God raised up and qualified for restoring His truth; and to the testimony of the Reformers we must now proceed to advert.

*Sec. II.—Testimony of the Reformers as to Presbyterianism.*

Episcopalians are in the habit of boasting, that for the space of fifteen hundred years, from the time of the apostles till the Reformation, Prelacy prevailed over the whole Christian church; and they adduce this as a very strong presumption in its favour; nay, they sometimes represent it as a proof that it was established by the apostles themselves. There are ample materials, as I have had occasion to show, for cutting off at least the first two of these centuries; and these are by far the most important,—indeed, the

only ones that are possessed of any real importance. It is an important fact, that ought never to be forgotten, that the only two productions we have of men who personally associated with the apostles, the genuineness and integrity of which is free from reasonable suspicion, are, the epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, and the epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians; and that these epistles contain satisfactory evidence that, in the age immediately succeeding that of the apostles, the churches of Corinth and Philippi, at least,—and we have no reason to suppose that there was anything peculiar in their case,—were governed upon Presbyterian, and not upon Prelatic, principles. But even if Prelatists could justly boast of the consenting practice of the whole church *after* the age of inspiration and infallibility, we would not hesitate to oppose to it, upon the field of human authority,—for in neither case does it rise higher,—the unanimous testimony of the Reformers.

We ascribe authority, properly so called, in religious matters, only to God, who is Lord of the conscience. We submit implicitly to men only when they can prove that they speak in His name, and under His guidance. We receive nothing as certainly coming from Him, and therefore imperatively binding upon us, except what is found recorded in His written word. And it is of the last importance to distinguish accurately at all times between what is properly authoritative and what is not,—between what at once imposes an obligation upon our understanding, and what merely affords a presumption or probability. But there is a reasonable deference due to the opinion of men, in certain circumstances, which may be regarded as affording some presumption, or indicating some probability, in favour of the scriptural truth of the views which they profess. And estimated by the dictates of right reason upon this point, we have no hesitation in regarding as superior in weight and value to that of any other body of men who could be specified, the testimony of those whom God, at the era of the Reformation, honoured as His special instruments, in bringing out and pressing upon the attention of the world the scriptural method of salvation revealed in His word. Everything about the men,—their general character and history,—the mode in which they ground their opinions,—the source from which they derived them,—and the gifts and graces which God bestowed upon them,—the success He vouchsafed to them in



bringing out and diffusing the fundamental doctrines of Christian theology,—all combine in giving probability to the conclusion, that the doctrines which they taught concerning the constitution and government of the church of Christ are in accordance with the sacred Scriptures. It is well known, that most of those men whom God raised up during the middle ages, as witnesses for Himself and His truth, amid the deep darkness of Popery, derived from the study of the Scriptures the leading principles of Presbyterianism on the subject of church government. And if, in addition to this, we find that the great body of the Reformers deduced Presbyterian principles from the same source,—and if this, again, be confirmed by the fact, that the Council of Trent condemned them, and that they now stand anathematized in the Church of Rome,—we have the largest accumulation of probabilities in their favour that can be derived from any mere human testimony. Now, all these positions can be conclusively established; and they form a much stronger presumption in favour of Presbyterian, than can be adduced in favour of Prelatic, principles.

With respect to the first of them, it may be sufficient at present to mention, that when Archbishop Bancroft published, in 1588, the sermon which, from its high Prelatic strain, gave so much offence to the Reformed churches, an answer to it was written by Dr John Reynolds, who was regarded at that time as the most learned man in the Church of England,\* in which, among other things, he asserted and proved, “that all they who have for five hundred years last past, endeavoured the reformation of the church have taught, that all pastors, whether they be called bishops or priests, are invested with equal authority and power.” It is perfectly certain, from the quotations formerly given, that the Council of Trent explicitly condemned the Presbyterian principles which they ascribed to the Reformers, and explicitly asserted, in opposition to them, the fundamental principles of Prelacy. And we have now to add, with reference to

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\* Bishop Hall, speaking of Reynolds, says, “He alone was a well-furnisht librarie, full of all faculties, of all studies, of all learning; the memory, the reading of that man, were neere to a miracle” (Works, folio,

p. 262). His letter to Sir Francis Knolls, in answer to Archbishop Bancroft, is to be found in Petrie’s Church History, and in Boyse’s Account of Ancient Episcopacy. Chaufepié has a life of him.

the remaining one of these three positions, that the Council of Trent were right in ascribing Presbyterian principles to the Reformers, and in regarding them as doctrines of the Reformation.

It cannot, indeed, be proved, that *all* the Reformers held that it was sinful or unlawful to introduce into, or to continue in, the church, all pre-eminence or superiority of one pastor over another. But the toleration which *some* of them manifested upon this point, did not arise from their holding anything like the proper principle of Prelacy; but solely from their not having, as I have shown was the case with Luther and his immediate followers, any clear perception of the unlawfulness of introducing, as a permanent arrangement, into the government of the church, anything which has not the positive sanction of Scripture. It can be proved, however, that the great body of the Reformers, including Luther and his followers, denied the fundamental principle of Prelacy, and maintained that there is nothing in Scripture which requires or sanctions the permanent existence in the church of a distinct order of functionaries higher than ordinary pastors,—nothing which proves that there is any ordinary function of the church, anything ordinarily necessary to be done in the administration of its affairs, to the execution of which presbyters are not fully competent. The Reformers were unable to find any evidence in Scripture of the apostles having indicated any intention that they should have successors in the apostolic office, though this is the position which many Episcopalians assign to their prelates, and though this idea is perhaps their most plausible mode of accounting for the non-appearance of prelates in the New Testament. The Reformers could see no trace in Scripture of the apostles having made, or enjoined, or sanctioned the appointment of any regular permanent order of functionaries for the service of the church, except presbyters and deacons. And they thought it perfectly certain, and beyond the reach of all reasonable doubt, that the New Testament uniformly ascribed the same names, and the same functions or duties, to those whom it calls indiscriminately bishops and presbyters. They professed themselves utterly unable to account for this remarkable fact, so different from anything to be found in the writings of more modern times, except upon the assumption, that the inspired writers used bishop and presbyter as two different names for one and the same class of functionaries; and that by this practice

they intended to indicate to us in what way, and by what orders of persons, the government of the church was to be permanently administered. That these were the views which were deduced from Scripture, with respect to the government of the church, by the great body of the Reformers, Lutheran and Calvinistic, can be easily and conclusively established from their writings. And, indeed, I think there is no impropriety in saying, that this is a question on which there is not room for an *honest* difference of opinion among men who have really examined it.

Yet it is well known that it is the general practice of Episcopalian controversialists, to assert that the Reformers in general, and even Calvin and Beza, were favourable, or at least were not unfavourable, to Prelacy. The process by which they usually attempt to establish this position, is in substance this: they overlook or conceal all those parts of the writings of the Reformers in which they discuss the subject of church government formally and of set purpose; and then they lay hold of incidental expressions, which, taken by themselves, may be somewhat ambiguous, and present them in a garbled and mutilated form, and without the light which the context and scope of the passage cast upon the meaning. Abundant illustrations of these statements might be easily produced from the writings of Episcopalian controversialists. The only excuse—and it is a very imperfect one—for the unwarrantable and discreditable course which many of them have pursued in this matter, is, that they have just copied their extracts from their predecessors, without taking the trouble of examining them in the writings of the authors from whom they were quoted. And I could produce, were it worth while, some curious instances, in which this long continued process of successive copying at second hand has worn away the traces of Presbyterianism which attached to some even of those passages when they were first brought forward for Prelatic purposes. The first collection of these garbled extracts to prove that the Continental Reformers were not unfavourable to Prelacy, was made by Archbishop Bancroft, who, as we have seen, was the first to break the peace among the Reformed churches. This he did chiefly in a very insolent and dishonest book, published in 1593, and entitled, “Survey of the Pretended Holy Discipline,”—that is, of course, of the Presbyterian views of government and worship advocated by the Puritans of that period. The book is intended and fitted

merely to excite prejudice, without fairly discussing the subject upon its merits. The leading object is, by misrepresentation and garbled extracts, to create an impression, that the leading defenders of Presbytery were dishonest, ignorant, and inconsistent,—that they had no fixed principles, and were at utter variance among themselves as to the grounds on which their cause should be defended. He does not, indeed, deny that Calvin had advocated and established Presbyterianism; and he pretends to give a minute account of the invention of Presbyterian church government by Calvin, and openly asserts that Presbyterianism was the mere result of external circumstances, or rather that it was fabricated by Calvin for selfish and ambitious purposes. But then he asserts that the chief impugners of bishops had begun to relent; and in proof of *this* position he adduces most of those passages from Calvin, Beza, and other Reformers, which the generality of Episcopalian controversialists have ever since, down even to the present day, been accustomed to quote, for the purpose of proving that they were favourable to Prelacy.

Another expedient that has been extensively employed by Episcopalian controversialists to neutralize the testimony of the Reformers in favour of Presbyterian, and in opposition to Prelatic, principles, is to represent them as setting up Presbyterian government from necessity, and as apologizing for their conduct in doing so by pleading the difficulties of their situation,—the great difficulty, if not impossibility, of doing anything else in the circumstances in which they were placed. In connection with this topic, some of them have made a very becoming display of their great charity, by pleading this excuse of necessity in behalf of the Continental Reformers; taking good care, at the same time, to aggravate, by the contrast, the conduct of those unreasonable Nonconformists in our own country, who, without the plea of necessity, have refused to embrace and submit to the apostolic form of government, as it is called, which is established among them.

This notion is very often brought forward in Episcopalian works. This mode of treating the subject may be admitted to indicate a somewhat kindlier spirit and temper than the course adopted by those sterner Episcopalians, who really unchurch all the churches of the Reformation. But the only thing that can be said of it with truth is, that it is a pure fabrication, without



any evidence whatever to rest upon. The Reformers never pleaded necessity in their own behalf, and they never condescended to apologize on that, or on any other, ground, for their approving and establishing Presbyterian church government. They always believed, and they openly and unhesitatingly maintained, that in doing so they were following the guidance of the sacred Scriptures,—that, in the arrangements they adopted and established with regard to the government of the church, they were only removing the corruptions which had been introduced into it, and were regulating it according to the mind and will of God revealed in His word. This is the uniform and consistent testimony which the Reformers gave on the subject in their writings; and there is not the slightest ground, in anything they ever said or did, for doubting its sincerity. Nay, several of the Reformed churches have introduced into their Confessions of Faith an explicit assertion of the fundamental principles of Presbyterianism, as a portion of the unchangeable truth of God revealed in His word, and imposed by His authority upon the faith and practice of the church. This attempt, then, to neutralize the testimony of the Reformers upon the subject of church government,—though in some respects well meant,—is altogether unsuccessful.

The only thing else of any moment which Episcopalians have brought forward in order to break the force of the testimony of the Reformers against Prelacy, and to soften the singularity of the position of the Church of England among the churches of the Reformation, is the existence of bishops in the churches of Denmark and Sweden, and of superintendents in some other Lutheran churches. The Episcopacy of Denmark and Sweden is but a slight deviation from the general uniformity of the Reformed churches as a whole; and, besides, the Protestant bishops set up in these countries at the Reformation were not the regular successors of men who had been consecrated to the episcopal office, but derived their ordination and authority from Luther, and the presbyters who were associated with him,—so that they were incapable of maintaining proper Prelatic principles, and thus resembled very much the present bishops of the Methodist Church in the United States, who derive their authority from John Wesley, and two other presbyters through Dr Coke, whom Wesley and his associates appointed a bishop. As to the superintendents in other Lutheran churches, this institution affords no testimony in

favour of proper Prelacy. These superintendents are not regarded as holding a distinct higher office, superior to that of presbyters, and investing them simply as holding that office with jurisdiction over ordinary pastors, but merely as presbyters raised by the common consent of their brethren to a certain very limited control for the sake of order. This institution is no proof that the Lutheran churches hold the *doctrine* of Prelacy, but merely that they hold the *lawfulness* of a certain limited pre-eminence or superiority being conferred by presbyters upon one of themselves. Indeed, the doctrine of Presbytery, as opposed to Prelacy, was not only held, as we have seen, by Luther and his associates, but was distinctly declared in the Articles of Smalcald, which is one of the symbolical books of the Lutheran church. There it is set forth, that all the functions of church government belong equally of right to all who preside over the churches, whether called pastors, presbyters, or bishops; and this general principle is expressly applied to ordination, as proving that ordination by ordinary pastors is valid.\*

The whole doctrine of the Lutheran church upon this subject is thus laid down by Buddæus,—and there cannot be a doubt that his statement fairly embodies what has always been held by the generality of Lutheran divines: “Si jus divinum spectes, ministri ecclesiæ omnes inter se, intuitu dignitatis et officii, sunt æquales. Discrimen enim, quod deinceps inter episcopos et presbyteros intercessit, tempore apostolorum ignotum fuit. Interim nihil obstat, quo minus ecclesia muneris et dignitatis quandam inæqualitatem introducat, modo non ex docentibus imperantes fiant, et, quod humana auctoritate factum est, jure divino constitutum credatur.”†

It has always been one of the leading general arguments which Romanists have adduced against the Reformers and their successors in the Protestant churches, that, though mere presbyters, they assumed functions which belonged only to bishops,—and especially that, as mere presbyters, they were incapable of preserving a succession of pastors in the church, since bishops alone had the power of ordaining to the ministerial office. And this, of course, is the same objection which is commonly adduced against us by Prelatists. The substance of the answer which has always been given by

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\* Tittmann, Lib. Symb. Eccles. | † Instit. Theol. Dogm., p. 1336 ;  
Evangel., p. 271. | Vide p. 1340. Ed. 1724.

Presbyterians to this objection, whether adduced by Romanists or by Prelatists, is this,—that, according to the standard of God's word, there is no higher permanent office in the church of Christ than the presbyterate, and that presbyters are fully competent to the execution of all necessary ecclesiastical functions. These two positions confirm and strengthen each other. If Christ has not appointed any higher permanent office in the church than the presbyterate, then presbyters *must* be competent to the execution of all necessary ecclesiastical functions; and, on the other hand, if they are competent to the execution of all necessary ecclesiastical functions, this is, at least, a very strong presumption that no higher office, with peculiar and exclusive functions, has been established. The functions which are assigned exclusively to the episcopate by the Council of Trent, and by Prelatists in general, and represented as at once its distinguishing characteristics, and the proofs of its necessity, are *confirmation* and *ordination*; and with respect to these two functions, the Reformers, and Protestants in general, have maintained and established these two positions: first, that confirmation is not a necessary ecclesiastical function,—not a process which there is any reason to believe that Christ intended to be carried on wherever He has a church, in the ordinary administration of affairs; and, secondly, that though ordination, or the solemn setting apart of men to the pastoral office, *is* necessary, and forms an indispensable part of the ordinary permanent business of the church, there is nothing in Scripture which throws any doubt upon the perfect competency of presbyters to ordain,—nay, that there is quite enough to establish positively, not only the validity, but the regularity, of the ordination which is performed, as Timothy's was, by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

These were the leading doctrines deduced from the sacred Scriptures by the whole body of the Reformers upon the subject of the government of the church; and their most unequivocal and decided testimony in favour of Presbyterian principles may well enable us to regard with perfect indifference the anathemas of the Council of Trent, and the denunciations of high church Prelatists, who stigmatize Presbyterian ministers as unwarranted and profane intruders into sacred offices and functions, and who consign the members of Presbyterian churches to what they call “uncovenanted mercies.”

*Sec. III.—Popular Election of Office-bearers.*

While the Papists contended that the government of the church was monarchical, in this sense, that it had permanently a visible head upon earth, vested *jure divino* with a right to govern it in all its affairs,—namely, the Bishop of Rome as the successor of Peter,—the Reformers maintained that it was monarchical only in this sense, that Christ was its head and ruler,—its only head and ruler,—and contended that it had no visible head upon earth. And with reference to the administration of the affairs of the church as a visible organized society existing upon earth, the Reformers were accustomed to contend, in opposition to the Romanists, that the government which Christ had appointed for His church was a combination of aristocracy and democracy.\* The aristocratic principle in the government of the church—taking the word, of course, not in the popular sense in which it is commonly employed among us, but in its proper philological meaning, as denoting the exercise of the power of government, by a comparatively small and select body of those who are regarded as best fitted for the discharge of the duty—is based upon the clear distinction made in Scripture between the rulers or office-bearers and the ordinary members of the church,—the warrant given to the former to exercise a certain kind and degree of authority, and the obligation imposed upon the latter to render a certain measure of obedience and submission to those who are set over them. The nature and extent of this authority, and of the correlative submission,—the principles by which they are regulated, and the classes or orders of persons in whom the authority is vested,—we have already considered. We have now to advert to the views maintained by the Reformers, in opposition to the Church of Rome, with respect to the democratic element, as embodied to some extent in the constitution of the church of Christ.

The position maintained by the Reformers,—that the democratic principle was exhibited in the constitution of the Christian church as well as the aristocratic,—involved this general idea, that the ordinary members of the church had some standing or influence, greater or less, direct or indirect, in the regulation of its affairs; and this general position they thought fully warranted by

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\* Rutherford's "Plea for Paul's Presbytery," p. 63. 1



what is said in Scripture concerning the church of Christ. The church, in its strict and proper sense, they were unanimous in defining to be the *coetus fidelium*,—the company of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ; and the visible church they regarded as comprehending all these, though containing also usually many who, while professing to believe in Christ, were believers only in name. The church, most strictly and properly so called, consisted of converted men,—of men, every one of whom had been elected from eternity to everlasting life, and every one of whom had been born again by the mighty power of God,—created again in Christ Jesus unto good works; and the catholic visible church comprehended in its embrace all the persons to whom this description applied existing at any one time upon earth. Now, this church is represented in Scripture as the spouse of Christ, the bride, the Lamb's wife; and glorious things are spoken of her. The great object of Christ's assuming human nature, and suffering and dying, was, that He might purchase to Himself this company as His peculiar property, and that He might make full and effectual provision for gathering them out of the world, and preparing them for sitting down with Him on His throne in heaven. It was for the purpose of calling these persons out from among the mass of men, and fitting them for the enjoyment of eternal blessedness, that He established a visible church upon earth,—appointed ordinances,—and made all the other arrangements of an external kind, by which His visible church is characterized. These arrangements were all directed to the welfare of His church,—they may be all regarded as privileges which He has conferred upon it; and they are so regulated, that the manner in which the visible church—including the various sections and divisions of which it may consist—discharges its duties and executes its functions, exercises the powers and improves the privileges He has conferred upon it, affects materially the great end of His coming, and suffering, and dying.

Papists are accustomed to identify the church on earth with Christ, its head, in the sense of its being not merely His representative, but clothed with all His power and authority, and entitled to act—especially through its visible head—as He might and would have acted had He been present. Protestants see no warrant in Scripture for this mode of representing the church, and are always careful to distinguish between the head and the body. The church is not Christ, but only the Lamb's wife, invested with no discretion-

ary power over the house, but bound to be guided in all things by the commands and directions of her Lord. Still the company of believers, and the catholic visible society, which contains or includes them, is invested with great dignity, and with exalted privileges. Even the ministry was appointed and established for its sake, and with a view to its welfare; and is, therefore, to be regarded as, in a certain sense, occupying a place subordinate to the church. The whole Popish system of doctrine, upon the subject of the government of the church, is based upon the opposite idea, as if the establishment of a church was intended for the object of providing subjects for ecclesiastical rulers; while Protestants have always regarded the ministry but as a means to an end, appointed and established for the sake of the church.

It is this great principle of the Reformation that is indicated, as I formerly mentioned, in the statement of our Confession of Faith,—namely, that to this catholic visible church Christ hath *given* the ministry, the ordinances, and the oracles of God. Christ has *given* these things to the visible church, and, therefore, they belong to it,—occupying thus, according to their respective natures and objects, a place, in some sense subordinate, as property is to its possessor. It was upon this general idea of the church, as represented to us in Scripture,—the place it occupies, and the powers and privileges conferred upon it,—that the Reformers pleaded the general sentiment of there being something democratic in its constitution,—that is, of the great body of the members composing it being entitled to exert some influence in the regulation of its affairs. They held, indeed, that the church was bound, by a regard to Christ's authority, to *have* office-bearers, and could not lawfully or beneficially continue without them, if it was possible to get them; and they held, also, that the ordinary exercise of the power of the keys—the right of ordinarily administering the necessary business of the church—was vested in these office-bearers. Still they also held, in general, that all the power and authority necessary for the church executing its functions and attaining its objects, lay radically and fundamentally in the church itself,—in the company of believers; so that, when necessity required, churches might provide and establish office-bearers for themselves, and do whatever might be needful for securing all the objects connected with their own welfare, which they were bound to aim at, and the enjoyment of all the ordinances which Christ had appointed. It

was upon this ground that the Lutherans laid down, in the Articles of Smalcald,—one of their symbolical books,—the following positions: “*Ubicunque est Ecclesia, ibi est jus administrandi Evangelii. Quare necesse, est Ecclesiam retinere jus vocandi, eligendi, et ordinandi ministros. Et hoc jus est donum proprie datum Ecclesiæ, quod nulla humana auctoritas Ecclesiæ eripere potest. Ubi est vera Ecclesia, ibi necesse est esse jus eligendi et ordinandi ministros.*”\*

These are positions which Calvin and the other Reformers would not have disputed in the abstract, though Calvin, with his usual comprehensive wisdom, was more careful, in expounding this subject, to lay down, at the same time, the doctrine which he believed to be also taught in Scripture as to the necessity of ministers and other office-bearers, *ex necessitate præcepti*, though not *ex necessitate mediæ*,—the obligation of every church to have ministers and office-bearers, to leave to them the ordinary administration of all divine ordinances, and to submit, with the limitations formerly explained, to the exercise of their authority in the execution of the functions of their office. The great general principle taught by the Reformers upon this subject, and generally held by Presbyterian divines, is thus expressed by Turretine: † “*Ecclesiis data est potestas clavium. . . . Christus dat Ecclesiæ potestatem ligandi et solvendi. . . . Fateor Ecclesiam hoc jus exercere per Rectores suos. Sed in eo Pastores exercent jus quod competit corpori, tanquam illud repræsentantes, ita ut jus illud radicaliter pertineat semper ad corpus, et illi proprium sit; ad Pastores verò quoad usum et exercitium, quod nomine corporis fieri debet.*” Notwithstanding the general admission of this principle, there are indications among the Reformers of differences of opinion as to the way in which the practical application of it ought to be followed out,—some applying it more democratically than others,—just as men have differed, and may honestly differ, in some of their views upon this subject, who concur in holding the general principle laid down in our Confession, that Christ has given the ministry, ordinances, and oracles to the catholic visible church.

But there was one point on which the Reformers were of one mind, and on this mainly they usually rested their general position, that the government of the church exhibited a combination of the democratic principle with the aristocratic; and it was this,—

\* Tittmann, pp. 271, 272.

† Turretin. Loc. xviii., Qu. xxiv., sec. vii.

that the ordinary members of the church, or Christian congregations, had a right to choose their own pastors and other office-bearers; and that, of course, *a fortiori*, they were fully entitled to prevent any pastor from being intruded upon them,—that is, placed over them without their consent, or against their will. This doctrine was taught by all the Reformers; and it was based by them, not only upon those portions of the New Testament which bear directly upon the election of ecclesiastical office-bearers, but also upon all the general views taught there concerning the functions and privileges of the church, and the rights and duties of individual Christians. This position, as to the views of the Reformers, has been disputed; but I have no hesitation in saying, as I said in regard to the subject formerly discussed, that this is not a question where there is room for an *honest* difference of opinion among competent judges, and that those who deny the position may, without injustice, be regarded either as asserting what they do not believe, or as being, on some ground or other,—whether it be ignorance, or want of sense or sobriety of judgment,—incompetent to form an opinion upon the point. I do not mean to enter into a detailed exposition of the evidence which might be adduced upon the subject; but I must make a few observations upon the import of the doctrine, and the general grounds on which we ascribe the maintenance of it to the Reformers, and regard the denial of it as Popish.

The Reformers were Presbyterians, and, of course, understood the position in a Presbyterian, and not in an Independent or Congregational, sense,—that is, they understood it with a due regard to the scriptural distinction between the position, powers, and functions of the rulers, and of the ordinary members of the church,—in other words, they did not exempt the people, in exercising the power of election, from the ordinary control and censure of the church courts; they ascribed to the ordinary office-bearers the right of presiding and moderating in elections, with full power to prevent faction, confusion, and tumult; and they ascribed also to those in whom the right of ordaining was vested ordinarily the right of judging for themselves whether or not the person chosen by the people should be ordained, and, of course, of refusing to ordain when they thought the choice a bad one. All this their principles as Presbyterians required of them to maintain; and all this they openly asserted; and when these considerations



are kept in remembrance, no person of ordinary intelligence and discernment will find any difficulty in disposing of the evidence that has sometimes been produced to show, that some of the Reformers denied the right of the Christian people to the election of their own office-bearers, and sanctioned the right of their ecclesiastical rulers to intrude pastors upon them against their will.

There is one other consideration to be kept in view in judging of the meaning of their statements,—namely, that they often used the word *election* in the wider sense of *vocation*, as comprehending the whole process by which men were made ministers, and became qualified and authorized to execute the functions of the ministry; and, accordingly, they sometimes ascribed the election of pastors to the office-bearers, and sometimes to the ordinary members, since both had a share in it; and as the most important departments of the general subject of the vocation of pastors,—including the process we commonly call licensing, the whole judgment on qualifications, and the ultimate ordination,—belonged, upon Presbyterian principles, to the office-bearers, it was not unusual to ascribe the election to them, and to speak of the place and function of the congregation in the matter—though it really comprehended the whole of what we commonly understand by election in the more limited sense—under the names of their consenting or approving. All this is conclusively established by an examination of the First Book of Discipline of our own church, and it is in full accordance with the sentiments and language of the Reformers in general.

It is also to be remembered, that the question is not, What was the mode of appointing ministers that actually prevailed in the Reformed churches? but, *What were the doctrines and opinions* of the Reformers as to the way and manner in which they *ought* to be appointed? It is not to be assumed that the Reformers always succeeded in getting their views on these points fully carried into effect. The Church of Scotland, though from the beginning decidedly opposed to lay patronage, never succeeded—except during the few years between 1649 and the Restoration—in getting it entirely abolished; and we have complaints from some of the Continental Reformers of the civil authorities interfering unwarrantably in this matter, and depriving congregations of their just and scriptural rights. To ascertain the doctrines of the Reformers on this point, we have to examine their confessions,

and those portions of their writings in which they formally expound and discuss the subject,—especially their commentaries upon those passages of Scripture which have been usually regarded as bearing upon it; and a careful and deliberate examination of these establishes beyond all reasonable or honest doubt, that the Reformers maintained, as a scriptural principle, in opposition to the Church of Rome, the right of the Christian people to the choice of their own pastors and office-bearers. The doctrine of the Lutheran churches is explicitly declared in the extract we have quoted from the Articles of Smalcald. That of the Reformed churches is set forth with equal clearness in the following extract from the Second Helvetic Confession, which was formally approved by most of them: “*Vocentur et eliguntur electione ecclesiastica et legitima ministri ecclesiæ: id est, eliguntur religiose ab ecclesia, vel ad hoc deputatis ab ecclesia, ordine justo, et absque turba, seditionibus et contentione.*”\* These are statements which *can* have but one meaning, which by no process of trickery can be evaded or explained away. Calvin’s views upon the subject are embodied in the following explicit and emphatic declaration: “*Est impia ecclesiæ spoliatio, quoties alicui populo ingeritur episcopus, quem non petierit, vel saltem libera voce approbarit.*”† It is utterly impossible to explain away this statement, and it is in full accordance with the uniform and consistent teaching of Calvin upon the subject in all his works. Not a single sentence has ever been produced from him which contradicts, or seems to contradict, the principle which is here so explicitly and emphatically declared; and no evidence has ever been produced, that on this, or on any other, occasion he has used, or seemed to use, the principal words which occur in this sentence in any other sense than that which they naturally and universally bear.

The sum and substance of all that has been alleged in order to prove that the Reformers did not teach, as a scriptural principle, the right of the Christian people to choose their own office-bearers, just amounts to this,—that by election and consent they did not mean election and consent, but something totally different; and that, in discussing this subject, they used these words in a sense in which they never were used by any other writers, or

\* Confess. Helvetic., cap. xviii. |  
 (Corp. Lib. Symbol., Augusti, 1827, |  
 pp. 58, 59.)

† Instit., Lib. iv., c. v., sec. 3.

upon any other occasion. As this is really the sum and substance of the only artifice by which it has been attempted to evade the testimony of the Reformers upon this subject, it ought, in common fairness, to be laid down as a distinct and definite proposition, and proved by suitable and appropriate evidence. If this were attempted,—as it ought to be, but as it never has been,—the deplorable deficiency of the proof would become palpable to every one; and no man of ordinary intelligence and integrity would be able to resist the conclusion, that, if it be possible to embody in words an unequivocal assertion that the Christian people are entitled, upon scriptural grounds, to choose their own pastors, the Reformers have done so, and have held up this as an important truth, in opposition to the doctrines and practices of the Church of Rome.

This is, in substance, the same artifice by which Popish writers have attempted to evade the evidence adduced to prove that the early church adopted and acted upon the principles of popular election and non-intrusion; but the artifice is less discreditable when attempted in the case of the early church than in that of the Reformers. The evidence that the early church held the same views upon this subject as the Reformers did, is satisfactory and conclusive; and the Reformers were accustomed to appeal to this evidence in opposing the Romanists upon this point, just as we do. But the evidence of the doctrine of the early church, at least upon the point of election,—for the proof that, even so late as the fifth and sixth centuries, the principles of non-intrusion in the natural, legitimate, and honest sense of it was the law of the church, is altogether beyond the reach of cavil, and has accordingly been admitted both by Papists and Episcopalians,—is less explicit than that of the Reformers; and the reason is, that in the early church the subject was not discussed, just because no controversy had arisen regarding it; whereas the Reformers had to oppose and refute the doctrine and practice of the Church of Rome upon the subject, and were thus led to be more full and explicit in their statements. Indeed, even if their particular statements had been much less explicit than they are, no one who has an intelligent acquaintance with the *status questionis* in the controversy between them and the Romanists on the subject, can have any doubt that they maintained the principle of popular election and non-intrusion. It is perfectly certain, and does not

admit of any dispute, that the Church of Rome conceded then, and concedes still, in doctrine and argument, as large an amount of influence to the people in the appointment of their pastors as is at present enjoyed by congregations in the Established Churches of this country; and that the grounds taken in argument by the defenders of the state of things which prevails in these institutions, are precisely, in all respects, those which have been taken by Popish writers, at least in defending intrusion. This being the case, it is plain, that if the Reformers had held the views which have been sometimes ascribed to them, there would not, and could not, have been any controversy between them and the Church of Rome upon this point. It is utterly impossible for the defenders of these views to point out any material distinction between them, and those which are held by the Church of Rome, and have been defended by all Popish writers. And yet we not only know that there was a controversy between the Reformers and the Romanists; but we can easily prove that the views which we hold were those maintained by the Reformers in this controversy, and that the views of the Romanists were precisely, and in all respects, those held by our opponents.

It is true of this subject of election and consent, as of the identity of bishop and presbyter formerly discussed, and perhaps still more fully in this case than the former, that traces and evidences of the scriptural primitive practice continued to subsist, and subsist still, in the Church of Rome, very much in the same way as the form of a call subsists in the Established Church, where the reality is gone. The doctrine of the necessity of the election or consent of the people in the appointment of ministers, as a doctrine unquestionably taught by the Reformers, was taken up in the Council of Trent, and discussed, and condemned there; and F. Paul has recorded\* a very curious speech made there on that occasion by a canon of Valentia, in which—after admitting that popular election prevailed in the early church, but alleging that this was merely a special indulgence granted for a time, and afterwards very properly taken away by the Popes; and after denouncing the audacity of the modern heretics,—that is, the Reformers,—in reviving this most dangerous heresy, which was fitted to ruin the church—he not only urged that the council

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\* Liv. vii., sec. vii.



should condemn it, but, further, that they should erase from their liturgical books a number of passages which had been handed down from ancient times, and which plainly suggested and proved the ancient practice of the election and consent of the people, and thus afforded a strong handle to heretics. The council adopted the first part of his proposal, and anathematized the Protestant heresy of the necessity of the people's consent; but they did not venture to adopt the second. They would, no doubt, have been very glad to have got quit of the passages which the worthy canon quoted from the Pontificale, and which afforded clear indications of the ancient practice, and plainly condemned their own; but they thought it more prudent to let the passages stand, and to leave to the heretical defenders of the necessity of the people's consent, the handle of having these passages to quote, than the handle of their having been erased.

The only thing possessed of plausibility that has been produced in opposition to the assertion, that the Reformers held the doctrine of popular election, is a letter of Beza's, which has been subjected of late to a good deal of discussion; and I refer to it at present, not because I can discuss its meaning,—this I have done fully in another form,\*—but because it is connected with the important historical fact, that in 1562, and again in 1572, these views of church government, which have since been called Independent or Congregational, having been broached by Morellius, or Morely, were brought under the cognisance of the Protestant Church of France, and were condemned by its supreme judicatory, with the general concurrence of the Reformed churches. Beza, like Calvin, has most unequivocally and explicitly asserted the right of the Christian people to choose their own pastors; but one or two vague and ambiguous expressions occur in this letter, and in another passage of his works, which have been eagerly laid hold of as grounds for evading his express declarations, and ascribing to him the doctrine of the Church of Rome, as opposed by Calvin and himself and the other Reformers. Some importance has been justly attached, in examining the statements produced from this letter of Beza, to the question, Whether the direct and primary subject of the letter was the election of office-bearers, or the whole power and authority ascribed to the people in the regulation of

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\* In reply to Sir Wm. Hamilton's "Be not Martyrs by mistake." (Edrs.)

ecclesiastical affairs by Morellius and the Independents. It is only upon the supposition that the proper primary subject of the letter is popular election, and not the whole power ascribed to the people by the Independents,—including, of course, popular election,—that the arguments of those who would represent Beza as sanctioning the Popish principle of intrusion, are possessed of anything like plausibility. Now, the evidence is perfectly conclusive, and cannot fail to be seen and felt by any one who is at all acquainted with the nature of the controversy which Morellius excited in the Reformed Church of France, that Beza's letter was directed not against the principle of popular election, in the sense in which it has been generally held by Presbyterians, but against the whole power ascribed by the Independents to the people in the regulation of *all* ecclesiastical affairs,—including, of course, the election of office-bearers, but comprehending a great deal more. And this affords a satisfactory explanation of one or two vague and ambiguous expressions in the letter, which might otherwise have had the appearance of being scarcely reconcilable with the clear and explicit declarations made by Beza, when treating of the subject of election, formally and of set purpose. The assertion which has been recently made, that “the problem there mooted is limited exclusively to the share which the congregation at large ought to have in the election of pastors,” and that “all has reference to this single point alone,” is one of those astounding declarations of which one does not know well what to say, and which almost compel us, whether we will or not, to doubt either the common sense or the common honesty of the men who make them.\*

But the important point to which I wish to direct attention, is, that the Protestant Church of France—and the Church of Geneva and the other Reformed churches cordially concurred with them in the matter—did, while condemning the Independent views of Morellius, as involving an extension of the democratic principle beyond what the Scripture warranted, continue to assert and maintain, as a scriptural doctrine, the principle of popular election, and the necessity of the people's consent. The principle of non-intrusion, in the natural and legitimate sense of it, was set forth in the discipline of the Reformed church of France, both before and after their condemnation of Morellius, so clearly and

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\* Animadversions on Sir W. Hamilton's Demonstration, pp. 32, 33.

explicitly as to preclude the possibility of an honest attempt to dispute it. And, what is peculiarly important, the right of the people to choose their own pastors is openly maintained in a work written for the express purpose of refuting Morellius, at the command of the National Synod, and published in their name by Sadeel or Chandieu. This fact is perfectly conclusive upon the question, and lies altogether beyond the reach of cavil or evasion. And this important general consideration holds true equally of the Scottish Presbyterians at the time of the Westminster Assembly, —namely, that while strenuously opposing the views of the Independents in regard to the general subject of church government, they continued to assert the great Reformation principle of the scriptural right of the people to the election of their own office-bearers. Some of the English Presbyterians, indeed, of that period yielded to the perverting influence of their controversy with the Independents, and of the circumstances of their country, and gave some indications of sacrificing or compromising this doctrine of the Reformation. But the Scotch Commissioners in the Westminster Assembly, and the Church of Scotland in general, acted a steadier and more consistent part,—adhering faithfully to the scriptural views of the Reformers, and transmitting them to us, to be asserted and maintained, as a portion of God's revealed truth, and intimately connected—as experience has abundantly proved—with the best interests and the real welfare of the church of Christ.

*Sec. IV.—Congregationalism, or Independency.*

In discussing the subject of the Council at Jerusalem, I entered with some detail into the leading points of difference between Presbyterians and Congregationalists on the subject of church government. For this reason, I do not intend now to dwell upon this topic at any length, but merely to put together a few observations regarding it.

Presbytery occupies the golden mean between Prelacy, on the one hand, and Congregationalism, on the other; holding some principles in regard to the government of the church in common with Prelatists against the Congregationalists, and others in common with Congregationalists against the Prelatists. The chief points in which Presbyterians agree with Prelatists, in opposition

to Congregationalists, are these: in denying that each congregation possesses ordinarily a right, and a divine right, to entire and absolute independence in the regulation of all its affairs; in ascribing the ordinary power of government in each congregation to the office-bearers, as distinguished from the ordinary members; and in maintaining the lawfulness and propriety of such a union or organization of different congregations together, as affords warrant and ground for the exercise of a certain measure of authoritative control by ecclesiastical office-bearers over a number of associated congregations.

Prelatists and Presbyterians concur in maintaining, in opposition to Congregationalists, these great general principles. They do not consider themselves called upon to concede to the whole body of the ordinary members of a congregation the right of ultimately deciding all questions relating to its affairs, and entire sufficiency for the regular performance of every function needful for the preservation of the church, and the administration of all necessary ecclesiastical business; and they refuse to concede to each congregation, regarded collectively and as one body, entire independence of all authority or control, exercised by any but its own members. They hold that the right, or rather, the ordinary exercise of the right, of administering the necessary business of each congregation, is vested, not in the whole members of the congregation, but in its office-bearers (though Presbyterians—not Episcopalians—have generally held, that each congregation has the right of choosing these office-bearers); and that a wider association of office-bearers is entitled to exercise jurisdiction over each and every one of the congregations which may be directly or indirectly represented in it. These general views may be said to be held both by Prelatists and Presbyterians, in opposition to Congregationalists; and are regarded by them as sanctioned by scriptural statements and apostolic practice, and as much more accordant than the opposite views with the scriptural representations of the character and constitution of the church of Christ,—and especially with the representations given us there of the church as a united, combined, organized body, whose different parts or sections should be closely and intimately linked together.

Presbyterians and Congregationalists concur in holding, in opposition to Episcopalians, that the apostles established only two



orders of office-bearers in the church,—namely, presbyters and deacons; while modern Congregationalists usually regard as unwarranted the distinction which Presbyterians make among presbyters or elders, by dividing them into two classes, one of whom only rule, and the other both teach and rule. Presbyterians may thus be said to have the concurrence of Episcopalians in the leading points in which they differ from the Congregationalists, and the concurrence of the Congregationalists in the leading points in which they differ from the Episcopalians. The only subject of any material importance affecting the government of the church on which Episcopalians and Congregationalists generally concur, in opposition to Presbyterians, is with respect to the scriptural warrant for the office of what we commonly call *ruling*, as distinguished from *teaching*, elders; and the weight due to this concurrence, in opposition to our views,—looking at it simply as a question of authority,—is very greatly diminished by the fact that the most eminent of the early defenders of Congregational principles,—such as Thomas Goodwin, John Cotton, and the great Dr John Owen,—were decidedly in favour of the scriptural authority for this office; and that Owen has declared of the principal passage on which the Presbyterian doctrine on this subject is founded,\* that it is a text “of uncontrollable evidence” (in support of the office of ruling elder), “if it had anything to conflict withal but prejudices and interest.”†

The two leading points in which Congregationalists differ from Presbyterians and Episcopalians upon the subject of church government, are sometimes represented as expressed or indicated by

\* 1 Tim. v. 17.

† Owen's True Nature of a Gospel Church, c. vii., p. 484, of the 20th vol. of Russell's edition. See Brown's Vindication of the Presbyterian Form of Church Government, Letter ix., p. 149, and Letter xi., pp. 189, 190. Similar admissions from some of the old divines of the Church of England, especially Whitgift and Whittaker, given in Voëtius and Jameson, as cited below. Treatise of New England Churches as to Ruling Elders, in Punchard's View of Congregationalism, p. 78. Full discussion of the subject of Ruling Elders in Voëtii Politica

Ecclesiastica, Pars. ii., Lib. ii.; Tract. iii., c. iv., v., vi. Reference to authorities, c. iv. as above, tom. iii., pp. 457-462. Jameson's Cyprianus Isotimus, p. 540. Bucer, De Gubernatione Ecclesiæ. Miller on the Office of the Ruling Elder. King on do., and his Exposition and Defence of Presbyterian Church Government. Smyth (of Charleston) on the Name, Nature, and Function of Ruling Elders.—His object is to prove that they are not presbyters, and that, as representatives of the people, their office should be temporary. This view is also held by Dr Hodge of Princeton.

the two principal designations by which they are usually known,—namely, “Congregationalists” and “Independents.” The word Congregationalist, under this idea, indicates more immediately that they hold that the body of the ordinary members of the church possesses the right of regulating all the affairs of the congregation, as distinguished from the office-bearers, to whom this right is ascribed by the Presbyterians; while the word “Independents” indicates more immediately their other leading principle,—namely, that each congregation, viewed collectively as one body, including the office-bearers, is independent of all external authority or control,—fully adequate of itself for preserving and perpetuating all church offices, and executing all church functions, and subject to no control from any other body whatever. This distinction is at least useful and convenient, as assisting us in conceiving rightly, and in remembering readily, the leading points in which, as Presbyterians, we differ in opinion from this section of the church of Christ.

These peculiar and distinctive principles of modern Independents or Congregationalists were not explicitly professed, and, of course, were neither formally defended nor assailed in the early church. As a subject of controversial discussion, they are wholly of modern origin. They seem to have been first publicly and distinctly broached, as exhibiting the scriptural views of the constitution and government of the church, by J. B. Morellius or Morely, who was connected with the Reformed Church of France, and whose work on the subject, entitled “*Traicté de la Discipline et Police Chretienne*,” was published at Lyons in 1561, and was soon thereafter condemned by the National Synod at Orleans in 1562, and again at Nismes in 1572. They were embraced also by Ramus, the celebrated philosopher, who was killed in the massacre of St Bartholomew; but they made no permanent impression upon the French Protestants. It was not till about twenty or thirty years later, near the end of the sixteenth century, that these views were brought out and practically acted upon in this country, by some persons who might be considered as offshoots of the true original English Puritans, and who were known for a time under the name of Brownists. These views have not been embraced to any considerable extent among the churches of Christ, and indeed scarcely by any except the descendants of those who first broached them in this country, and who are a

more numerous body now in the United States than in Great Britain.\*

It is true, indeed, also, that we have not much controversial discussion in regard to Episcopacy and Presbytery before the Reformation; but we have at least a pretty full and formal statement of the argument in favour of these two systems as early as the fourth century,—of the scriptural argument in favour of Presbytery by Jerome, usually regarded as the most learned of the fathers,—and of the argument in favour of Prelacy by Epiphanius in reply to Ærius. And it may be worth while to observe, in passing, that Jerome's scriptural argument for Presbytery is still generally regarded by Presbyterians as a conclusive and unanswerable defence of their cause; while the earliest defence of Prelacy, by Epiphanius, has been admitted by some of the ablest defenders of Prelacy—such as Cardinal Bellarmine, De Dominis, Archbishop of Spalatro, and Hooker—to be weak and unsatisfactory, though they have not, I think, been able to devise anything that was greatly superior to it.

There is not much connected with the history of the original publication and maintenance of Independent views of church government to commend them to a favourable reception. They were, however, taken up in substance in the seventeenth century by some men who are entitled to the highest respect, and they were embraced and defended very ably in their leading principles, as we have stated then, by Dr Owen,—certainly one of the very weightiest names in the history of the church,—though he did not carry them out so far as most modern Independents have done. It is true, likewise, that, in the history of modern ecclesiastical literature, there is a good deal to which Independents may not unreasonably refer, as affording pretty strong presumptions, so far as mere authority goes, in favour of their peculiar views. I allude here particularly to the fact, that several very eminent investigators of the history of the church, who did not themselves make a profession of Congregational principles, have conceded that the

\* On the history of these views, see Punchard's History of Congregationalism, 1841, and Hanbury's Historical Memorials relating to the Independents, vol. i., 1839. On Morely, see Haag's "La France Protestante;" Aymon, "Tous les Synodes Nation-

aux," tome i., pp. 29, 122-124. On Ramus, Haag, "La Ramée;" Beza, Epistolæ, Epist. lxxvii., lxxviii. Bayle, tome iii., Art. Ramus. Waddington's "Ramus, Sa vie, ses écrits et ses opinions," 1855, pp. 239-248, 434.

practice of the early church, from the time immediately succeeding that of the apostles, was either wholly or in a great measure in accordance with that of Congregationalists. Instances of this are Sir Peter King, afterwards Lord Chancellor, Mosheim, Dr Campbell of Aberdeen, and Neander.\* These men have all made statements in regard to the constitution and government of the primitive church, which Independents are fairly entitled to plead, as affording some countenance to the peculiar views which they hold in opposition to Presbyterians, though, at the same time, it should be noted, as holding true of *all* these men, that they did not regard even apostolic practice upon this subject as binding upon the church in succeeding ages. Still, the opinion they expressed as to the general practice of the church in the first and second centuries, must be admitted to lend some countenance to the views commonly held upon this subject by Congregationalists, and to be well fitted, at once from the general eminence of the men, and their ecclesiastical relations, to prepossess men's minds in favour of Independency. These eminent men have, more or less fully and explicitly, asserted, that, for the first century at least, each congregation—that is, the whole members of it, and not merely its office-bearers—transacted in common the whole of the ordinary necessary ecclesiastical business, including the exercise of discipline, and that each congregation was wholly independent of every other, and subject to no control from any party beyond or without itself.

The fundamental argument in favour of Congregational principles is the position, that the only two senses of the word church in the New Testament,—the only two ideas which it warrants us in attaching to that word,—are either a single congregation, or the whole collective body of Christ's people, real or professed; and Dr Campbell, though he continued all his days a minister of the Church of Scotland, and was a most assiduous and ostentatious proclaimer of his own integrity and candour, has distinctly con-

\* King, in his *Inquiry into the Constitution of the Primitive Church*,—Mosheim, in his *Church History and Commentaries*,—Campbell, in his *Lectures on Ecclesiastical History*,—and Neander, in his *Planting and Training of the Christian Church*. See the testimonies of these men, and of others,

collected in Punchard's *View of "Congregationalism,"* Part iii.; Andover, 1844. See also Coleman's "Church without a Bishop;" or, "The Apostolical and Primitive Church, Popular in its Government, and Simple in its Worship," c. iii.



ceded this to them. I had formerly occasion to explain this point, in discussing the general subject of the Scripture doctrine concerning the church, and to illustrate the grounds on which Presbyterians generally deny this position, and maintain that, while no doubt these are the most usual and ordinary meanings in Scripture, there is also sufficient scriptural warrant for applying the word *ἐκκλησία*, in the singular number, to a plurality of congregations associated together and represented as a church,—that is, as one church, because subject to one Presbyterian government. It must be remembered, that if this proposition be established, which is laid down in our Form of Church Government,—namely, “That the Scripture doth hold forth that many particular congregations may be under one Presbyterian government,”—the chief medium of its probation being this, that the Christians at Jerusalem, who must have consisted of many congregations, are still called “a church” in the singular, and as a church had elders and rulers in common,—then the question between Presbyterians and Congregationalists is settled, in so far as concerns that leading principle of the latter, which has given origin to the name Independents. Another case of the application of *ἐκκλησία*, in the singular, to a number of churches collectively, is to be found in the reading adopted in Acts ix. 31, by Lachmann, Tischendorf, and Tregelles.\* The Congregationalists do not deny that the Christians at Jerusalem and Ephesus are spoken of as a church,—that is, as one church; but they deny that they consisted of several distinct congregations. The evidence of this, however, is, we think, in the case of Jerusalem, overwhelmingly conclusive, and in the case of Ephesus, sufficient and satisfactory; and, on this particular point of the existence of a plurality of congregations in Jerusalem, Mosheim is, as I formerly mentioned, very decided in favour of the common Presbyterian view.†

I have likewise had occasion to show, in examining the Council of Jerusalem, recorded in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts, and illustrating the lessons it teaches us in regard to the government of the church and the administration of ecclesiastical affairs, that there is there a marked distinction exhibited between the position and functions of office-bearers and of ordinary members in decid-

\* *Vide* Tregelles' Account of the printed text of the Greek N. T., p. 269.

† *Commentarii*, p. 116.

ing upon ecclesiastical questions, and a clear sanction given to two important principles vitally affecting the subject we are now considering,—namely, first, that the proper judicial power of determining questions which arise in the church is vested in the office-bearers, and not in the ordinary members; and, secondly, that an assembly of office-bearers may lawfully possess and exercise authoritative control over particular congregations, and may authoritatively determine questions which may have arisen in any of the congregations over whom they have jurisdiction. I need not now go back upon these points; but would merely remark, that Presbyterians contend that these principles are in accordance with all that is taught us in the New Testament, concerning the general character of the functions of the church, and the principles by which its affairs ought to be regulated,—concerning the rights, functions, and duties of office-bearers, and the relation between them and the ordinary members of the church,—and are not contradicted by anything taught there upon these subjects. Presbyterians have generally held that there is not sufficient scriptural warrant for ascribing to the members, as distinguished from the office-bearers of the church, any proper judicial authority in deciding the questions that may arise in the ordinary administration of ecclesiastical affairs. But they have also generally held, and, as they think, in perfect accordance with this principle, first, that congregations have a right to choose their own office-bearers; and, secondly, that they ought to be consulted in regard to the more important acts of ecclesiastical discipline by which they are affected; and that their consent and concurrence in them should be laboured for in the exercise of all appropriate means, and should, if possible, be obtained. Both Papists and Congregationalists have accused them of inconsistency, in denying to the people all judicial authority, on the one hand, and conceding to them the election of their own office-bearers on the other,—Papists saying, that since Presbyterians reject the one, they ought, in consistency, to reject both; and Congregationalists—using the same medium of probation—arguing that, since they concede one, they ought to concede both. But it is easy enough to show, in opposition to these two different classes of adversaries, that these two things are by no means identical, and that the one which is conceded does not by any means infer the one which is denied, in the nature of the case. And in regard to the scriptural evi-

dence bearing upon these two subjects respectively, Presbyterians have always contended that there is sufficient evidence of the one and not of the other,—that the Scripture assigns to the ordinary members of the church a definite and influential place in the appointment of their own office-bearers, which it does not assign to them in any other department of ecclesiastical affairs.

We likewise contend, in opposition to Congregationalists, and to the high authorities formerly referred to, that there is nothing, in what has come down to us of the history and documents of the primitive church, which assigns to congregations a higher or wider power or influence in the regulation of the affairs of the church, than Presbyterians, as above stated, concede to them on scriptural grounds. So far as the Congregational principle is concerned, as distinguished from the Independent, according to the explanation formerly given, there is nothing in primitive antiquity which shows that the people had at that time any greater standing or influence in the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs than what is fully provided for, and exhausted by, the Presbyterian principles,—that they have a right to choose their own office-bearers, and that their consent and concurrence were sought, and usually obtained, in all the decisions and important acts of discipline which affected them. It is plain enough, that the actual amount of prominence and influence which the fair application of these Presbyterian principles, without the Congregational one, would give to congregations in the ordinary regulation of ecclesiastical affairs, might vary considerably in its outward manifestations, according to the general condition and circumstances of the church; and it is also plain, that the whole condition and circumstances of the primitive church were such as tended powerfully to give to congregations a larger amount of prominence and influence than what might be theoretically or doctrinally assigned to them. Keeping this consideration in view, it becomes, we think, very plain, that there is nothing in the records of primitive antiquity which affords any proof that the people generally had more influence or authority in the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs than is consistent with Presbyterian principles.

Mosheim says, on this subject,\* “It was the assembly of the people, which chose their own rulers and teachers, or received them

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\* Cent. i., P. ii., c. ii., s. vi. (Maclaine's Translation).

by a free and authoritative consent, when recommended by others." This is true; Clement's Epistle proves it, and Presbyterians concede it. "But," Mosheim goes on to say, "the same people rejected or confirmed by their suffrages, the laws that were proposed by their rulers to the assembly; excommunicated profligate and unworthy members of the church, restored the penitent to their forfeited privileges, passed judgment upon the different subjects of controversy and dissension that arose in their community; examined and decided the disputes which happened between the elders and deacons; and, in a word, exercised all that authority which belongs to such as are invested with the sovereign power." Now, I have never seen anything like evidence of this statement produced. As the statement is applied to the first century, the only source from which evidence of it could be derived is the writings of the apostolic fathers; and there is certainly nothing in their works from which conclusions so strong and sweeping can be legitimately deduced. The truth is, that we have no evidence of any such disputes or dissensions arising during this period as were likely to produce or to indicate anything precise or definite as to the rightful limits of competing jurisdictions; and no amount or extent of mere *de facto* concurrence between office-bearers and congregations in the regulation of ecclesiastical matters, can afford any valid objection to our Presbyterian principles.

As to the other peculiar principle held by Congregationalists,—that which is more immediately indicated by the name Independents,—it is commonly put in this form: that in the primitive church all the churches or congregations were independent of each other; that they all possessed equal rights; and that no one congregation possessed any jurisdiction or control over any other. This statement is undoubtedly true; but there is nothing in it inconsistent with Presbyterian principles, though many Congregationalists seem to regard it as virtually identical with their peculiar view upon this subject. Presbyterians maintain, that as all pastors are equal, so all congregations are equal; that as no one pastor has any jurisdiction over any other, so this holds equally true of congregations; that they are all possessed of equal rights and authority. The party to whom they ascribe a certain measure of control over a congregation, is not another congregation or *its* representatives, but a body which comprehends in it, virtually and representatively, *many* congregations, including the



particular congregation whose affairs may be the immediate subject of consideration. The Council of Jerusalem is not supposed by Presbyterians to exhibit the *Church of Jerusalem* as exercising jurisdiction over the church at Antioch, but as being a body met at Jerusalem, which, in virtue of the elements of which it was composed, represented, and was entitled to exercise jurisdiction equally over, the particular churches of Jerusalem and Antioch, and indeed, as many believe, over other churches represented by it. This general principle pervades all Presbyterian arrangements. Each pastor, each congregation, each classical assembly, and each synodical assembly, is equal to, and independent of, any other one of the same species or degree. They all possess equal rights. A classical assembly, or presbytery, possesses jurisdiction over a number of pastors, and a number of congregations, just because it comprehends or includes, virtually or representatively, all these pastors and all these congregations; and the same principle applies to synods, or other superior church courts, in relation to presbyteries. It is not to the purpose, then, to allege and to prove, that in the primitive church all congregations were equal to, and independent of, each other,—possessed of equal authority or jurisdiction. There is nothing in this which is in the least inconsistent with the principles and the practice of Presbyterians, or which furnishes any countenance to the views of the Independents. And yet we believe that this is all that has been, or can be, proved, in regard to the general state or condition of the primitive churches.

Mosheim, after asserting the independence and equality of all the congregations in the first century, goes on to say, what is more relevant to the subject we are now considering,\*—“Nor does there even appear in this first century, the smallest trace of that association of provincial churches, from which councils and metropolitans derive their origin.” Now, the extent and the regularity to which congregations may be associated under presbyterial government and arrangements, must of course depend, to some extent, upon the condition of the church in general, in the particular age and country, and on the general condition of the community. The condition of the church and of the world, in the apostolic age, and in that immediately following it, was certainly

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\* Cent. i., P. ii., c. ii., s. xiv.

not favourable to the general diffusion of the detailed development of Presbyterian organization and arrangements. We have no doubt, that a congregation of professing Christians may be so placed in providence, as to be warranted, upon the ground of the general principles taught in Scripture concerning the rights and prerogatives of the church, to organize itself in Independency, without actual subjection to Presbyterian government, and to provide within itself for the execution of all ecclesiastical functions, and for its own perpetuation; and we do not dispute that such churches or congregations existed in early times; but if the general principle of such association and organization is sanctioned by Scripture, and if some specimens of it are set before us there, in apostolic practice,—and this, we think, Presbyterians have satisfactorily established,—then we are entitled to say, that this associated and organized condition is the complete, normal, and perfect state of the church, which ought ever to be aimed at, and, as far as circumstances and opportunities admit of it, carried out and exhibited in practice. And there is nothing in the records of primitive antiquity, which affords any ground for denying that this scriptural and Presbyterian principle was exhibited and acted upon as far as the general condition of the church and the world rendered this practicable; and, on the contrary, there is not a little which favours the idea that this was aimed at, and was to some extent accomplished. It is not, of course, contended, that Presbyterian organization and arrangements, in their complete and detailed development, were universally diffused in the primitive church; but there is good ground to believe that our fundamental principles, as indicated in Scripture, were acted upon as far as circumstances admitted of it,—and that *very soon*, as the natural and appropriate result of scriptural sentiment and feeling prevailing among Christians as to the general character and constitution of the church, as to the right relation of particular churches to each other, and as to the consequence of filling up and following out arrangements which the apostles had sanctioned, the church in general *became*, in its leading features and arrangements, and continued to be, until the original government of the church was changed by the gradual growth of Prelacy, substantially Presbyterian.\*

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\* The books on this subject are just those we mentioned when treating of the Council of Jerusalem.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE ERASTIAN CONTROVERSY.

#### *Sec. I.—The Civil Magistrate and Religion.*

THE general subject of the relation that ought to subsist between the state and the church, or between the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, had been discussed before the Reformation, usually under the designation of the controversy *inter imperium et sacerdotium*; and I have had occasion to give some account of the very defective and imperfect manner in which the topic was then commonly treated: the one party defending the Popish extreme of the subjection of the civil to the ecclesiastical, and the other the opposite extreme of the subjection of the ecclesiastical to the civil,—which came afterwards to be commonly called among Protestants by the name of Erastianism; while scarcely any had a clear perception of the true scriptural Presbyterian doctrine of the mutual independence of the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities,—of the supremacy of each in its own province,—or of the true principle of connection between them, as described by the expressions, *a co-ordination of powers*, and *a mutual subordination of persons*.

I have already pointed out the clear and definite line of demarcation between Popish principles upon this subject, and those which have been usually maintained by Presbyterians as scriptural; and exposed the weakness and unfairness of the common Episcopalian and Erastian plan of dealing with the arguments in support of the only points in which Papists and Presbyterians agree,—namely, the unlawfulness of the civil authorities assuming and exercising jurisdiction or authoritative control in ecclesiastical matters,—the plan just consisting in evading the arguments upon the merits, and attempting, as a substitute, to make something, as a means of exciting prejudice, of the mere fact, that thus far, and

upon this point, Presbyterians and Papists *do* agree. I wish now to make some remarks on the way in which this subject was stated and discussed at the period of the Reformation.

The circumstances in which the Reformers were placed in providence, while such as naturally and necessarily led them to speak and write on the subject of the civil magistrate's interfering in religious and ecclesiastical matters, were not by any means favourable to the object of their forming precisely accurate and definite opinions regarding it. In the Church of Rome the two jurisdictions were wholly confounded,—the civil magistrate being deprived of all independent authority, and being required or obliged to act as the mere servant of the church, the executor of her sentences, irrespective of his own judgment or conviction,—or the clergy themselves having assumed, and exercising, civil as well as ecclesiastical power and functions. The Reformers were, on this account, exposed, like the ante-Reformation defenders of the rights of the empire against the priesthood, to some temptation to extend unduly the rights of the magistrate in religious matters. They had, besides, generally speaking, more to expect in the way of protection and support to themselves, and of countenance and encouragement to the truth which they proclaimed, from the civil than from the ecclesiastical authorities. When any of the civil rulers did espouse the cause of the Reformation, there was, in consequence of the thorough mixing up of things civil and things ecclesiastical, and the entire subjection of the former to the latter, which had previously obtained, a necessity for their doing a great deal, and making many important alterations, in ecclesiastical matters, in opposition to the existing ecclesiastical authorities; and this the Reformers would scarcely fail to approve and defend. All this produced very naturally a tendency, on the part of the Reformers, to state the powers and rights of the civil magistrate with respect to religious matters in the fullest and strongest terms. On this account, it would not be in the least surprising if the first Reformers, especially in the early part of their labours, when some of the civil authorities began to exert themselves in the cause of the Reformation, had spoken of the power of civil rulers in these matters in somewhat wide and incautious terms; and also that, as this general topic did not become at that period a subject of full and formal controversial discussion, some of them had never attained to perfect precision and accuracy in their opinions re-



garding it. Now, this, we find, was to some extent the case; and on this account we cannot appeal with the same confidence to what may be called the testimony of the Reformers upon this subject, as upon some other topics connected with the government of the church and the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs. It can scarcely be proved that, upon some of the points involved in what has since been called the Erastian controversy, there was any very explicit and harmonious testimony given by the Reformers as a body; and I certainly do not consider myself warranted in saying, in regard to this matter, what might be said in regard to the subjects of Presbyterian church government and popular election,—namely, that the question as to what were the views of the Reformers concerning it is not one where there is room for an honest difference of opinion.

The Reformers all strenuously asserted the lawfulness, the advantages, and the divine institution of civil magistracy; and this general position may be confidently maintained concerning them, that they usually assigned to the civil authorities, *at least* all the powers and prerogatives, and imposed upon them at least all the obligations, which can be shown to have any sanction from the sacred Scriptures. They were led to give considerable prominence to their general views on the subject of civil magistracy, not only because the Church of Rome had depressed civil rulers beneath their proper place, and deprived them of their rightful and independent jurisdiction, but also because the Anabaptists condemned all civil magistracy as unauthorized and unlawful under the Christian dispensation, and denied that Christians should either exercise or acknowledge it. These facts, too, furnish the reasons why magistracy was commonly introduced as the subject of a chapter or section in the confessions of the Reformed churches, and why it has generally continued to form a distinct head for discussion in the systems of theology.

Under the general head of the civil magistrate, or of civil magistracy,—that is, in the exposition of what is taught in Scripture concerning the functions and duties of the *supreme* civil authorities of a nation, whatever be its form of government,—the Reformers were unanimous and decided in asserting what has been called in modern times the principle of national establishments of religion,—namely, that it is competent to, and incumbent upon, nations, as such, and civil rulers in their official capacity, or in the

exercise of their legitimate control over civil matters, to aim at the promotion of the honour of God, the welfare of true religion, and the prosperity of the church of Christ. This principle, which comprehends or implies the whole of what we are concerned to maintain upon the subject of national establishments of religion, we believe to be fully sanctioned by Scripture; and we can appeal, in support of it, to the decided and unanimous testimony of the Reformers,—while the Anabaptists of that period seem to have been the first, if we except the Donatists of the fifth century, who stumbled upon something like the opposite doctrine, or what is now-a-days commonly called the Voluntary principle.

The “Voluntary principle” is, indeed, a most inaccurate and unsuitable designation of the doctrine to which it is now commonly applied, and is fitted to insinuate a radically erroneous view of the *status quæstionis* in the controversy. The Voluntary principle properly means the principle that an obligation lies upon men to labour, in the willing application of their talents, influence, and worldly substance, for the advancement of the cause of God and the kingdom of Christ. Of course no defender of the principle of national establishments of religion ever questioned the truth of the Voluntary principle in this its only proper sense. The true ground of difference is just this,—that we who hold the principle of national establishments of religion extend this general obligation to nations and their rulers, while those who are opposed to us limit it to individuals; so that the Voluntary principle, in the only sense in which we reject and oppose it,—and in the only sense, consequently, in which it forms a subject of fair and honourable controversy,—is a mere limitation of the sphere of this obligation to promote the cause of God and the kingdom of Christ—a mere negation that the obligation in this respect which attaches to individuals, extends also to nations and their rulers. We have no intention, however, at present of discussing this question. We have merely to advert to the unanimous and decided testimony of the Reformers in support of the general doctrine, as a portion of scriptural truth,—that the civil magistrate is bound, in the exercise of his legitimate authority, of his rightful jurisdiction over national affairs, to seek to promote, as far as he can, the welfare of true religion, and the prosperity of the church of Christ.

It has been often alleged, in order to neutralize the testimony of the Reformers in support of this doctrine, that as they main-

tained some great errors upon this general subject, and more especially as they ascribed to civil rulers an authoritative control in the affairs of the church, such as would now be called Erastian, —and as they approved of intolerance and persecution upon religious grounds,—their sentiments about the power and duty of the civil magistrate in regard to religion are entitled to no respect. As to the first of these allegations, we do not admit, but deny, that the Reformers in general held Erastian principles, or ascribed to civil rulers an authoritative control over the affairs of the church ; though it is true, as we have admitted, that there were some of them whose views upon this subject were not very well defined, or very accurately brought out. As to the second allegation, we admit that they held erroneous views upon the subject of toleration, and ascribed to the civil magistrate a power of punishing upon religious grounds, which is now universally rejected by Protestants ; but we do not admit that their undoubted error upon this point deprives their general testimony, in support of the scriptural duty of nations and their rulers, of all weight or claim to respect.

There is an essential difference between the general duty or obligation alleged to be incumbent upon nations and their rulers, with reference to the promoting true religion and the welfare of the church of Christ, and the specific measures which they may be warranted and called upon to adopt in the discharge of this duty, for the attainment of this end. The question as to what particular measures the civil magistrate may or should adopt in this matter, and with a view to this object, is, comparatively speaking, one of detail, or at least of inferior importance, and of greater difficulty and intricacy. Men who concur in asserting the general duty or obligation as a portion of scriptural truth, may differ from each other about the measures which it may be lawful or incumbent to adopt in discharging it. And errors in regard to the particular way in which the duty ought to be discharged ought not, in fairness, to prepossess men's minds against the general truth that such a duty is binding. The first question is this, Does an obligation to promote the welfare of true religion, and the prosperity of the church of Christ, attach to nations, as such, and to civil rulers as representing them, and as regulating their affairs ? And if this question be settled in the affirmative, as we think it ought to be, then we have next to consider, In what way or by what means ought the duty to be discharged ? Upon this second

question there is room for considerable difference of opinion, both with respect to what may lawfully be done with that view, and what is naturally fitted as a means to effect the end; while it is also plain, that, in regard to some of the topics comprehended in the general subject, the particular condition of the nation or community at the time may very materially affect or determine both what it is practicable and what it is expedient to do in the matter.

There are, indeed, some general principles upon this subject, which may be easily enough discovered and established from Scripture, reason, and experience, and which are now generally admitted; and these both of a positive and of a negative kind,—that is, setting forth both what civil rulers ought to do, and what they ought not to do, in the discharge of this duty, and for the attainment of this end. It is with the negative principle alone that we have to do at present, in considering the value of the testimony of the Reformers in support of the general obligation. And the two most important of them certainly are these: First, that civil rulers, in seeking to discharge their duty in regard to religion, must not assume any jurisdiction or authoritative control over the regulation of the affairs of the church of Christ; and, secondly, that they must not inflict upon men civil pains and penalties,—fines, imprisonment, or death,—merely on account of differences of opinion upon religious subjects. What is shut out by the first of these principles, is what is commonly understood by Erastianism; and it is precluded or rendered unlawful by what is revealed in Scripture concerning the character, constitution, and government of the church of Christ,—concerning the principles, the standard, and the parties by which its affairs ought to be regulated. What is shut out by the second of these principles is intolerance or persecution; and it is precluded or rendered unlawful by the want of any scriptural sanction for it,—by God's exclusive lordship over the conscience,—and by the natural rights and liberties which He has conferred upon men. These essential limitations of the right of interference on the part of civil rulers in religious matters seem to us very plain; but they have not been always seen and appreciated by those who have contended for the scriptural duty of nations and their rulers. There is nothing, indeed, in the maintenance of the general principle of the obligation of nations and their rulers, which, either by logical sequence



or by natural tendency, leads men to advocate either Erastianism or intolerance; and it is unwarranted and unfair to attempt to burden the general principle with the responsibility of rejecting or excluding either of the two negative positions above laid down. It is also true, however, that the first of them is still to this day disregarded and trampled upon in every Protestant established church in the world; for there is not now one in which the state has not sinfully usurped, and the church has not sinfully submitted to, Erastian domination. The second, which excludes as unlawful all intolerance or persecution, has been always denied and rejected by the Church of Rome; and as the denial of it seemed to have some countenance from Scripture, most of the Reformers continued to retain, in a greater or less degree, the sentiments upon this point in which the Church of Rome had instructed them.

Practically, it is a worse thing,—more injurious to the interests of religion and the welfare of the community, and more offensive to the feelings of Christian men,—that civil rulers should Erastianize the church, which they profess and design to favour, and should persecute those who dissent from it, than that they should, in fact, do nothing whatever in regard to religion, and with a view to its promotion. But it does not follow from this, that theoretically, as a matter of doctrine or speculation, it is a less error,—a smaller deviation from the standard of truth,—to deny altogether that any such duty is incumbent upon nations and their rulers, than to maintain some erroneous notions as to the way in which the duty ought to be discharged. We are firmly persuaded that all Erastianism and all intolerance are precluded as unlawful,—as sinfully interfering with the rights of the church and the rights of conscience; but still we are disposed to regard it as being quite as obvious and certain a truth, that a general obligation to aim at the promotion of the welfare of true religion and the prosperity of the church of Christ, attaches to nations and their rulers, as that everything which might be comprehended under the head of Erastianism or intolerance is precluded as unlawful. And it is very much upon this ground that we refuse to admit that the error of the Reformers, in sanctioning to some extent the Popish principle of intolerance and persecution, and especially in pressing the right of civil rulers to inflict punishment upon account of errors in religion beyond what the word of God

warrants or requires of them, is to be regarded as wholly neutralizing the weight of their testimony,—so far as human testimony is entitled to any weight in a matter of this sort,—in support of the doctrine as to the obligations attaching to nations and their rulers, with reference to true religion and the church of Christ. The general subject of the principles by which civil rulers ought to be guided, in the discharge of their duty with respect to religion, was not then carefully investigated. It was too commonly assumed, that the general obligation being once established, anything that had a *prima facie* appearance of possessing, or was at the time usually supposed to possess, any tendency or fitness to promote the end, might, and must, be tried in the performance of the duty. Both those who defended Erastianism and those who defended persecution, were accustomed to act upon this assumption, and to imagine that they had established their Erastian and intolerant principles respectively, when they had really done nothing more than establish the great general duty of the magistrate, without having proved the lawfulness or the obligation of those particular modes of discharging it.

A striking illustration of this may be found in the writings of Beza and Grotius,—two very eminent men. Beza wrote an elaborate treatise in defence of intolerant and persecuting principles, with special reference to the case of Servetus, entitled, “*De Hæreticis a civili Magistratu puniendis.*” His leading object in this work is to prove that heretics and blasphemers may be lawfully put to death by the civil magistrate; and that Servetus, being a heretic and blasphemer, suffered only the merited punishment of his crimes; but all that he really does prove, so far as the general question is concerned, is only this,—that civil magistrates are entitled and bound, in the exercise of their authority, to aim at the promotion of the honour of God and the interests of truth, and, of course, at the discouragement of blasphemy and heresy. He proves this, and he proves it conclusively; in other words, he proves the scriptural authority of the great general principle from which the abstract lawfulness of national establishments of religion may be deduced. But he proves nothing more than this: he does not prove that, under the Christian dispensation, civil rulers are warranted, and much less bound, to inflict the punishment of death upon heretics and blasphemers; and neither does he prove that putting heretics and blasphemers to

death has any real tendency or fitness, in the long run, as a means to discourage heresy and blasphemy.

Grotius, in like manner, wrote an elaborate treatise in defence of principles which were thoroughly Erastian, entitled, "De Imperio Summarum Potestatum circa Sacra." In order to accomplish this object, he just begins, as Beza had done, by establishing the general principle of the obligation of civil rulers to aim at the promotion of the welfare of religion and the prosperity of the church, and then virtually assumes that this settled the whole of the general question, leaving for subsequent investigation only the extent to which civil rulers ought to interfere authoritatively in the regulation and administration of the different departments of the ordinary business of the church. He proves satisfactorily, as Beza had done, the right and duty of civil rulers to aim at the promotion of the welfare of true religion and the prosperity of the church; but in establishing this position, he adduces nothing which really concludes in favour of the Erastian control over the church, which he assumed to be involved in it. A power, indeed, *circa sacra*,—the expression which Grotius employed in the title of his work,—Presbyterian and anti-Erastian divines have usually conceded to the civil magistrate; and, indeed, this is necessarily involved in the general principle to which we have so often referred, and which implies that his obligation to aim at the promotion of true religion entitles and requires him to employ his legitimate authority, or rightful jurisdiction, in civil things with a view to the advancement of the interests of religion. But a mere power, *circa sacra*, affords no sufficient warrant for the Erastian domination over the church, which it was the great object of Grotius's book to establish. Erastianism is a power not merely *circa sacra*, but *in sacris*,—a right to exercise proper jurisdiction or authoritative control in the actual regulation of ecclesiastical affairs, in the administration of the ordinary necessary business of the church, as an organized society; and this power is not only not involved in, or deducible from, the general principle of the duty of civil rulers to aim at the welfare of the church, but is precluded by all that Scripture makes known to us concerning the church, its relation to Christ and to His word, and the whole provision which He has made for its government.

These cases illustrate the distinction that ought to be made between the general principle that an obligation attaches to na-

tions and their rulers, to aim at the promotion of true religion and the prosperity of the church of Christ, and the adoption of any particular theory as to the means which may, or should, be employed for that purpose. All this tends to show that it is unwarrantable to burden the general principle with the particular applications that have often been made of it; while it also tends to afford a very strong presumption in favour of the clearness and certainty of the grounds, derived both from Scripture and reason, on which the general principle itself can be established.

It is right to mention, before leaving this branch of the subject, that the Reformers in general did not retain the whole of the intolerant and persecuting principles which they had been taught by the Church of Rome. They saw and acknowledged the unlawfulness and absurdity of the Popish principle of employing force or persecution for the purpose of leading men to make an outward profession of the truth. And, accordingly, they never gave any countenance to those wholesale persecutions which form so characteristic a feature of the great apostasy. The principal error on the subject of the magistrate's power with respect to religion which retained a hold of the minds of the generality of the Reformers, and perverted their sentiments and their conduct upon this whole subject, was the notion of the right and duty of civil rulers to punish men, and even to inflict the punishment of death, on account of heresy and blasphemy. They admitted the general principle of the right of civil rulers to inflict pains and penalties on account of heresy and blasphemy, though they would have restricted the punishment of death to those who were doing extensive injury in leading others into the commission of these sins. Now, this was a notion which, though it had no solid foundation to rest upon, and was both erroneous and dangerous, was not altogether destitute of something like plausible countenance in some scriptural statements, and especially in a natural enough misapplication of some considerations derived from the judicial law of Moses. The subject, indeed, is not free from difficulties; and it is not to be wondered at, that the notion above stated should have retained some hold of the minds of the Reformers. The question continued to perplex the minds of theologians for several generations; and it cannot be denied that, during nearly the whole even of the seventeenth century, Protestant divines in general ascribed, in speculation at least, to civil rulers, a power of



inflicting punishment on account of heresy, which is now universally rejected, except by the adherents of the Church of Rome.

Luther seems to have become convinced, that in his earlier writings he had spoken too loosely and too widely of the right of civil rulers to interfere in the regulation of the affairs of the church; though it ought to be mentioned, to his honour, that from the first he restricted their right to inflict punishment, on account of heresy or serious religious error, within narrower limits than almost any one of the Reformers. It may be worth while here to refer to two remarkable passages from Luther's later works, in the first of which he denies to civil rulers all right of authoritative interference or control in the regulation of the affairs of the church, and does so in language resembling, both in its substance and meaning, and in its tone and spirit, what our forefathers were accustomed to employ when contending, in opposition to the usurpations of the civil powers, for Christ's sole right to reign in His own kingdom, and to rule in His own house; and in the second of which he expressed his strong apprehension of the grievous injury which was likely to accrue to the Protestant church from the Erastian control which civil rulers were claiming and usurping over the regulation of its affairs, in return for the protection and assistance which they rendered to it. In a paper, addressed to Melancthon, and published in his "*Consilia*," Luther, after denying the right of bishops to exercise domination over the church, proceeds to say: "Episcopus, ut Princeps, multo minus potest supra Ecclesiam imponere quidquam; quia hoc esset prorsus confundere has duas Potestates, . . . et nos si admitteremus, tam essemus paris sacrilegii rei. Hic potius est moriendum, quam hanc impietatem et iniquitatem committere. Loquor de ecclesia, ut Ecclesia, distincta jam a civitate politica."\* The other passage is too long to quote, but it very emphatically expresses Luther's deep apprehensions of great injury to religion from the growing interference of civil rulers in the affairs of the church. It can be easily proved that Melancthon fully shared in Luther's apprehensions of mischief and danger from this quarter. And, indeed, there are plain enough indications that the apprehensions which Melancthon entertained of injury to the Protestant church, and to the interests of true religion, from the interference of the civil authorities in

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\* Voetii Polit. Eccles., P. i., Lib. i., Tract. ii., c. iii., tom. i., p. 174.

the regulation of its affairs, was one of the considerations which weighed heavily upon his mind, and had some influence in producing that strong desire of an adjustment with the Church of Rome, and that tendency to the compromise of truth, or something like it, which formed so prominent a feature in his history. And we think it abundantly manifest, from a survey of the history of Protestantism for a period of three hundred years, that these apprehensions of Luther and Melancthon about the injurious tendency and effect of the authoritative interference of civil rulers in the regulation of the affairs of the church, have been fully realized. The civil authorities, in most Protestant countries, aimed at, and succeeded in, getting very much the same control over the church which they professed to favour and assist, as the Pope had claimed and exercised over the church at large; and this has proved, in many ways, most injurious to the interests of true religion. Of all Protestant countries, England is the one where this claim of civil supremacy over the church was most openly put forth, most fully conceded, and most injuriously exercised; while our own beloved land—Scotland—is that in which it has all along been most strenuously and successfully resisted. Indeed, it was only in the year 1843 that the civil power *fully* succeeded in acquiring an Erastian control over the Presbyterian Establishment of Scotland, and reducing it to the same state of sinful subjection to which all other Protestant ecclesiastical establishments had long before bowed their necks.

Calvin, though he did not rise above the prevailing sentiments of his age, in regard to the civil magistrate's right to punish heresy, manifested his usual comprehensive soundness and penetrating judgment in grasping firmly and accurately the true scriptural principle that ought to regulate the relation of the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities, so far as concerns the ordinary administration of the church's affairs, in opposition to all Erastian encroachments of the civil power. Mosheim's account of Calvin's sentiments upon this subject is undoubtedly correct, though, as we have had occasion to explain, he gives an erroneous representation of those of Zwingle. His words are worth quoting in the original, because they are more precise and definite than Murdock's, and much more than Maclaine's translation of them. Mosheim says: "Calvinus magistratum in res religionis potestatem angustis circumscribebat finibus, atque ecclesiam sui juris" (spiritual independence) "esse,

seque ipsam per collegia Presbyterorum et Synodos seu conventus Presbyterorum, veteris ecclesiæ more, regere" (self-government) "debere adseverabat, tutelâ tamen et externâ curâ ecclesiæ magistratui relictâ."\* The sentiments here ascribed, and justly ascribed, to Calvin, embody, with accuracy and precision, the sum and substance of all that has been usually contended for by Presbyterians, in opposition to Erastian claims and pretensions; and though Calvin was not called in providence to develop fully, and to apply in all their details, the principles which he professed upon this subject, yet the principles themselves, as he has stated them, and the practical applications which he did make of them to some questions of church discipline controverted between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities of Geneva, establish, beyond all reasonable doubt, what side he would have taken in those subsequent speculations and practical proceedings, which may be said to constitute what is called the Erastian controversy.

*Sec. II.—Erastus and the Erastians.*

Thomas Erastus, who has given his name to this controversy, did not publish his sentiments till after the first generation of Reformers had been removed to their rest. He was a physician at Heidelberg, then the capital of the dominions of the Elector Palatine, and the head-quarters of Calvinism, as distinguished from Lutheranism, among the German churches; and seems to have been held in high estimation on account of his talents, acquirements, and general character. In 1568, an attempt was made to introduce into the churches of the Palatinate a more rigorous discipline with respect to the admission of men to the sacraments,—a subject which in that, and in one or two other Reformed churches, had hitherto been very much neglected. Erastus set himself to oppose this attempt at the reformation or purification of the church, and prepared, upon the occasion, a hundred theses or propositions,—afterwards reduced to seventy-five,—directed to the object of showing that Scripture did not sanction the claim of the church, as a society, or of its office-bearers, to excommunicate or exclude from the sacraments, on account of immoral conduct, men who made a

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\* Moshemii Institut., Sæc. xvi., sec. | Lib. iv., c. xi., sec. 16. Revii Examen.,  
iii., P. ii., c. ii., § xii. Calvin. Institut., | p. 21.

profession of Christianity, and desired admission to the ordinances. These theses were not published, but were sent in manuscript to Beza, as the most influential man in the Reformed church after the death of Calvin. Beza wrote a full and able reply to them, and sent it to Erastus, who, soon after, in 1570, drew up a very full and elaborate answer to Beza, in six books, which he called "*Thesium Confirmatio.*" Bullinger and Gualther, at that time the leading divines of Zurich,—the former the immediate successor, and the latter the son-in-law, of Zwingli,—were, to some extent, favourable to Erastus's view in regard to discipline and excommunication. They strenuously exerted themselves to prevent a public controversy upon the subject, and they succeeded in prevailing upon both parties to abstain from publishing their works. Thus matters remained until after Erastus's death, when, in 1589, his widow, who had removed to England, where such a project was sure to gain countenance, published at London, at the instigation and under the patronage of Archbishop Whitgift, both the Theses and the Confirmation of them, with some recommendatory letters of Bullinger and Gualther subjoined to them, and with fictitious names assigned both to the place of publication and the printer. When this work reached Beza, he at once published, in 1590, his original answer to Erastus's theses, under the title of "*Tractatus pius et moderatus de Vera Excommunicatione et Christiano Presbyterio,*" with a very interesting preface, in which he gave some account of the history of this matter,—animadverted upon the sentiments of Bullinger and Gualther,—and declared his intention, though he was now seventy years of age, of preparing and publishing a full answer to the Confirmation,—an intention, however, which he did not carry into effect.

The works both of Erastus and Beza are chiefly occupied with a discussion of the subject of excommunication,—that is, with the investigation of the question, whether Scripture warrants and sanctions the exercise, by courts of ecclesiastical office-bearers, of the power of excluding from the participation of the sacraments professing Christians who are guilty of immorality,—Beza affirming this, and Erastus denying it, and arguing elaborately and ingeniously in support of his position, though obliged, from its intrinsic absurdity and palpable falsehood, to perpetrate some very considerable inconsistencies, as is explained in the first chapter of the second book of Gillespie's "*Aaron's Rod Blossoming,*" where



there is a very interesting history of the origin and growth of Erastianism. Erastus's name, however, could not probably have been generally employed to designate a controversy which for more than two centuries has been commonly regarded and spoken of among Protestants as comprehending a discussion of the whole subject of the relation that ought to subsist between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities, if he had confined himself rigidly to the one topic of excommunication, and to the examination of the scriptural grounds on which the right of excommunication is alleged to rest. And, accordingly, we find that, in the preface, and in the conclusion to his Theses, and still more fully in the first chapter of the third book of the Confirmation, he has distinctly entered upon the wider field above described, as embraced by the controversy which has since been called after his name. He has there explicitly ascribed to the civil magistrate a general jurisdiction, or right of authoritative control, in the regulation of the affairs of the church, and has denied that Christ has appointed a distinct government in the church for the administration of its ordinary necessary business; and these are the points on which the whole of what is usually understood to be comprehended in the Erastian controversy, and the whole subject of the authority of civil rulers in regard to religion and the church of Christ, really turn. Erastus has not only ascribed to the civil magistrate jurisdiction or authoritative control in ecclesiastical matters, and denied the appointment by Christ of a distinct government in the church; but he has indicated some of the leading arguments by which these views have ever since been, and continue to this day to be, defended. He has distinctly declared his concurrence\* in the general principle which both Papists and Erastians have always been accustomed to adduce in support of their opposite views upon this subject,—namely, the absurdity of what they call an *imperium in imperio*, or, what is virtually the same thing, the necessity of there being one power and government which has supreme and ultimate jurisdiction over all matters, both civil and ecclesiastical,—Papists, of course, vesting this supremacy in the church, or in the Pope, as representing it; and Erastus, and all who have since been called after his name, vesting it in the civil magistrate. It is thus manifest, that though Erastus's book is chiefly occupied

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\* Pp. 159-161.

with the subject of excommunication, he really laid the foundation among Protestants of what is usually called the Erastian controversy, and indicated the leading grounds which have commonly been taken by those who have since held what Presbyterian divines have always been accustomed to designate Erastian views, on the whole subject of the relation that ought to subsist between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities.

Erastus admits, indeed, that the civil magistrate, in administering ecclesiastical affairs, is bound to take the word of God as his only rule and standard; and in this he is less Erastian than some who, in modern times, have been ranked under that designation,—not, perhaps, without some injustice to him, but most certainly without any injustice to them,—inasmuch as the persons to whom we refer have asserted principles, and pursued a course of conduct, which led, by necessary logical sequence, to the conclusion that the law of the land, *as such*,—that is, *irrespective of its accordance with the word of God*,—is a right and proper standard for regulating the affairs of the church. But while Erastus admits that the word of God is the only rule by which the affairs of the church ought to be regulated, he denies to ecclesiastical office-bearers the right of judging authoritatively as to the application of scriptural statements to the decision of the questions which must arise occasionally wherever a church exists, and makes the civil magistrate the supreme and ultimate judge of all those questions connected with the administration of the affairs of the church, which require to be judicially or forensically determined.

There is one important point on which Erastus deviated further from the opinions commonly entertained than most of those who have been usually called after his name. Most of those who have been described—and, upon the grounds already explained, justly described—by Presbyterian divines as Erastians, have admitted a distinction of functions, though not of government, in relation to civil and ecclesiastical affairs; in other words, while they have in general contended, more or less openly and explicitly, that all judicial or forensic questions about the admission of men to office and ordinances must be ultimately, and in the last resort, decided by the civil magistrate,—thus denying a distinct government in the church,—they have usually conceded that ecclesiastical office-bearers alone can legitimately *administer* these ordinances,—thus admitting a distinction of function between magistrates and

ministers. Even the Church of England expressly excludes the civil magistrate from a right to administer the word and sacraments. But Erastus has plainly enough indicated his opinion that the civil magistrate might warrantably and legitimately administer these ordinances himself, if his other duties allowed him leisure for the work :\* “ Quod addis, non licere Magistratui, re ita postulante, docere et Sacramenta administrare (si modo per negotia possit utrique muneri sufficere), id verum non est. Nusquam enim Deus vetuit.”

As Erastus has plainly asserted all the views which we have ascribed to him, so Beza has opposed and refuted them all, except, of course, the position which, as we have seen, Erastus conceded,—namely, that the word of God is the only rule or standard by which the affairs of the church ought to be regulated ; and in the opposition which he made to them, he had the decided and cordial concurrence of the generality of the Reformed divines, and of all sound Presbyterian theologians in every age.

Erastians, in modern times, have sometimes appealed to the Reformers in support of their opinions, and have professed to derive some support from that quarter ; and I have admitted that the testimony of the Reformers is not so full, explicit, and conclusive, as upon the subject of Presbyterian church government, and the popular election of ecclesiastical office-bearers,—and explained the reason of this. Still it can be shown,—and I think I have produced sufficient materials to establish the conclusion,—that the testimony of the Reformers in general is not for, but against, Erastian views of the powers and rights of civil magistrates in the administration of ecclesiastical affairs. We may briefly advert to some of the principal grounds on which Erastians have claimed the testimony of the Reformers, or some of them, in favour of their opinions.

First, they appeal to some rather strong and incautious statements of Luther and Zwingle, in instigating and encouraging—the one the Elector of Saxony, and the other the magistrates of Zurich—to zeal and activity in exercising their power to overturn the Popish system, and promote the cause of the Reformation. We admit that some of the statements referred to indicate, to some extent, a want of clear and accurate conceptions of the line of demarcation between the provinces of the civil and the ecclesiastical

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\* P. 265.

authorities ; but we have already said enough to show that this fact is not one of much importance or relevancy, and to prove that Erastians have no right to appeal to the mature and deliberate testimony of Luther and Zwingle.

Of a similar kind, though of still less real value, is the reference sometimes made to certain statements made by our own Reformer, John Knox, especially in his Appellation or appeal to the nobility of Scotland against the sentence of death pronounced upon him by the ecclesiastical authorities. There is really nothing so objectionable or inaccurate in any statement they have been able to produce from Knox, as in some of those made by Luther and Zwingle. Knox had the benefit of the light thrown upon this subject by the comprehensive and sagacious mind of Calvin ; and he has not been betrayed into any statement distinctively Erastian,—any statement implying a denial of a distinct government in the church, or an ascription to civil rulers of jurisdiction in ecclesiastical affairs. His appeal, primarily and directly, respected a matter which was in its own nature *purely civil*, and lay within the province of the magistrate,—namely, a sentence of death which had been pronounced upon him by the ecclesiastical authorities ; and in calling upon the civil powers to reverse this sentence, and to preserve him from its consequence, he did not need to ascribe, and he has not ascribed, to them any jurisdiction over the affairs of the church. His more general exhortations to them to exercise their power in opposition to the Papacy, and for the promotion of Protestant truth, are all resolvable into the general principle as to the duty of nations and their rulers, which we have already explained and illustrated,—a principle held by all the Reformers. In short, no statements have been produced from Knox which favour Erastianism ; and in the views laid down in the first Scotch Confession, which he prepared, upon the subject of the church, its constitution, and the principles on which its government ought to be conducted, there is enough to exclude everything which could be justly comprehended under that designation,—everything which subsequent Presbyterian divines would have refused or hesitated to adopt.

Secondly, Another consideration usually founded on by modern Erastians, is the measure of countenance and approbation which Bullinger and Gualther gave to the writings of Erastus. Their approbation, however, seems to have been extended only to what



was the direct and primary subject of Erastus's Theses,—namely, excommunication,—without including his peculiar opinions about the powers of the civil magistrate generally. And even in regard to the subject of excommunication, Beza has shown, in the preface to his answer to Erastus, by extracts which he produces from their writings, that they were very far from concurring in all his views upon this point; and, especially, that they did not adopt his interpretation of those passages of Scripture which bear upon the subject of excommunication.\*

The only other topic adduced by modern Erastians, in order to procure some countenance for their views from the Reformers, is the fact, that two or three other divines of that period, in addition to Bullinger and Gualther,—though not any one of the first rank, or of great name and authority,—gave some sanction to this notion, that when there was no Christian magistrate in the church, ecclesiastical office-bearers should themselves exercise all the functions of discipline, including excommunication; *but* that when there was a Christian magistrate, exercising his authority in protecting and assisting the church, the exercise of discipline should be left to him, and should not be assumed by ecclesiastical office-bearers. We admit that this was an unreasonable and ill-founded notion, and that the men who held it entertained defective and inaccurate views in regard to the rights and functions of the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities. But it did not prevail among the divines of that period to such an extent,—viewed either with reference to their number or their standing,—as to affect the import of the testimony of the Reformers as a body. It is a notion which has been often since mooted, more or less explicitly, by Erastian writers, who, in their want of argument, seem to think that this pretence may be conveniently employed for the purpose of palliating, if not justifying, some degree of authoritative civil interference in ecclesiastical affairs. It is at bottom very similar to the distinction that has been sometimes set up in our own day,—though its authors have never ventured to make any very distinct or explicit application of it,—between a church of Christ, absolutely considered, and an established church.

But the falsehood of the distinction, and of everything approach-

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\* *Vide* De Moor, Comment. in Marck. Compend., c. xxxiii., § xxi., tom. vi., p. 400.

ing to it or resembling it, and its utter inadequacy to afford any countenance to any authoritative interference of civil rulers in ecclesiastical affairs, have been, centuries ago, demonstrated by Presbyterian writers, by establishing the two following positions: First, that the civil magistrate does not, by becoming a Christian and a member of the church,—by taking the church under his protection, and exerting his authority and influence for promoting its prosperity,—by conferring upon it any temporal favours or privileges,—acquire any new right or power in addition to what is competent to him simply as a magistrate, and, more especially, that he does not thereby acquire any right to assume any ecclesiastical function or jurisdiction, or to interfere authoritatively in the regulation of any ecclesiastical matters; and, secondly, that the church and its office-bearers not only are not bound, but are not at liberty, to delegate or concede, for any reason or in any circumstances, to any party, the discharge of any of the duties which Christ has imposed upon them,—the execution of any of the functions which He has bestowed upon them,—but are bound at all times, in all circumstances, and at all hazards, to do themselves the whole necessary business of Christ's house, on their own responsibility, subject to Him alone, and according to the standard of His word. These positions can be conclusively established,—they go to the root of the matter,—they overturn from the foundation all Erastian encroachments upon the rights and liberties of the church of Christ, and all the pretences by which they have been, or can be, defended,—they fully vindicate the struggles and contendings of our forefathers against the interference of the civil authorities in ecclesiastical matters,—they fully warrant the proceedings on the part of those who now constitute the Free Church of Scotland, which led to the Disruption of the ecclesiastical establishment of this country,—and they establish not only the warrantableness, but the obligation and the necessity, of those steps by which we have been brought, under God's guidance, into the position we now occupy.

*Sec. III.—Erastianism during the Seventeenth Century.*

To the Erastian controversy I have already had occasion to advert in our earlier discussions. I have had to notice the controversy between the emperors and the popes of the middle ages,

about the respective provinces and functions of the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities, or, as it was then commonly called, the contest *inter imperium et sacerdotium*; and I took the opportunity then of explaining fully the distinction between the Popish doctrine upon this subject, and that held by the Presbyterians, which is often—from ignorance or something worse—confounded with it; while, in connection with the sixteenth century, I had to give some account of the views of Erastus himself, who has had the honour of giving his name to this controversy, and of the controversy in England during Elizabeth's reign.

The seventeenth century, however, was the principal era of this important controversy about the principles that ought to regulate the relation between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities, and to determine their respective provinces and functions,—the era at which the real merits of the whole subject, and of all the topics involved in it, were most fully developed, and the most important works on both sides were composed. The subject has been revived in our own day; and it is now possessed of at least as much practical importance as ever it had, and must always be peculiarly interesting to every one connected with the Free Church of Scotland. I shall only mention the principal occasions when this subject gave rise to controversial discussion, and the most important works which these different branches of the controversy produced.

The earliest discussions upon this subject, in the seventeenth century, were connected with the rise and progress of the Arminian controversy in Holland, and arose out of the interference of the civil authorities in the theological disputes which the views of Arminius and his followers produced,—so much so, that it has been said that this might be regarded as a *sixth* point or article in the Arminian controversy. The Arminians generally adopted Erastian views,—that is, of course, they ascribed a larger measure of jurisdiction or authority to the civil magistrate in religious and ecclesiastical matters, than Calvinists and Presbyterians generally have thought warranted by the word of God. The cause of this was partly, no doubt, because they found that, during the earlier stages of the controversy, previous to the calling of the Synod of Dort, the civil authorities generally favoured them, and were disposed to promote their views; while the ecclesiastical authorities—the church courts—decidedly opposed their innovations. But

their leaning to Erastianism had a deeper foundation than this, in the general character and tendency of their doctrinal views,—especially in their latitudinarianism, which implied or produced a want of an adequate sense of responsibility connected with the discovery and the maintenance of all God's truth; and thus tended to dispose them towards an allowance or toleration of the interference of a foreign and incompetent authority in the decision of religious controversies, and in the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs.

In 1614, the States of Holland, under Arminian influence, issued a decree imposing great limitations, amounting virtually to a prohibition, upon the public discussion of the controverted points,—very similar, indeed, both in its substance and in its object, to the declaration afterwards issued by royal authority, in England, under Laud's influence. The orthodox divines—especially Sibrandus Lubbertus, professor at Francker—attacked this decree, at once as requiring what was sinful in itself, that is, a neglect or violation of a duty which God had imposed,—and as involving a sinful assumption of authority on the part of the civil powers. Grotius defended this decree, and the principles on which it was based, in several pieces contained in the sixth volume of his theological works; the principal of which, entitled "*Ordinum Hollandiæ ac Westfrisiæ Pietas*," contains a good specimen of the combination of Erastianism with the most latitudinarian views in regard to doctrine. He wrote, about the same time, his famous treatise, "*De Imperio Summarum Potestatum circa Sacra*," which I have had occasion to mention,—an elaborate defence of a system of the grossest Erastianism, such as some even of his Prelatic correspondents in England could not digest. This work was not published till 1647, two years after its author's death. Another branch of the same controversy originated in a work of Utenbogard, minister at the Hague, a very zealous and influential supporter of Arminianism, published in Dutch in 1610, on the authority of the Christian magistrate in ecclesiastical matters. This was answered, in 1615, by Walæus, afterwards professor of theology at Leyden, in a very valuable treatise, entitled "*De munere Ministrorum Ecclesiæ, et Inspectione Magistratus circa illud*," contained in the second volume of his collected works, which also include some important treatises on the Arminian controversy, especially in defence of Molinæus's "*Anatome Arminianismi*" against Corvinus. Utenbogard's treatise was defended,



and Walæus's answered, by two men of very superior talents and learning—Gerhard John Vossius and Episcopius. Vossius was a man of great learning, and leaned very much to Arminianism, though he did not fully embrace the whole of that system of theology. His answer to Walæus was written in 1616, in the form of a letter to Grotius; and it is contained in a very curious and interesting work, entitled, “Præstantium ac Eruditorum Virorum Epistolæ Ecclesiasticæ et Theologicæ,”—a work published by Limborch, and designed to advance the cause of Arminianism. It was also published separately in a small quarto, in 1669, under the title of “Dissertatio Epistolica de jure Magistratus in rebus Ecclesiasticis.” Episcopius's defence of Utenbogard was published in 1618, entitled, “De jure Magistratus circa sacra,” and is contained in the second volume of his works. The controversy upon this subject between the Calvinists and the Arminians continued, without any material change of ground, after the Synod of Dort, in 1618–19; and there is some discussion of it, on the one side, in the “Censura” of the Leyden divines, on the Confession of the Remonstrants; and, on the other, in Episcopius's “Apologia pro Confessione,” in reply to the “Censura.”

A somewhat different aspect was given to the controversy, by the publication, in 1641, of a small work by Vedelius, entitled, “De Episcopatu Constantini Magni.” Vedelius was a Calvinist, professor of theology at Franeker, and had written a valuable book, which was very galling to the Arminians, entitled, “De Arcanis Arminianismi,” and was answered by Episcopius. He professed to reject the doctrine of the Arminians, in regard to the jurisdiction of the civil magistrate with respect to religious matters, and to assign to him much less authority,—a much more limited right of interference,—than they had done; but his views did not satisfy the generality of orthodox divines, who still thought them somewhat Erastian, and maintained that, in opposing Popish errors, he had gone too far to the other extreme, and had ascribed to the civil power too much authority in religious matters. From the very modified views held by Vedelius upon this subject, his opponents, in answering him, were led to deal more closely than had ever been done before, with the real intricacies and difficulties of the question, and with the minuter distinctions which are necessary for the more full development and the more exact elucidation of the different topics which it involves; and *their* works, in consequence,

have usually been regarded by sound Presbyterian divines, as exhibiting the most complete and accurate view of the principles involved in what has been commonly called the Erastian controversy. The principal answers to Vedelius's work were these three,—all of them valuable works, and well worthy of being perused by those who wish to understand this question thoroughly,—Revius's "Examen Dissertationis Vedelii;" Triglandius's "Dissertatio Theologica de Civili et Ecclesiastica Potestate;" and Apollonius's "Jus Majestatis circa Sacra,"—all published immediately after Vedelius's work, and just about the time of the meeting of the Westminster Assembly. Voetius also, professor of divinity for many years at Utrecht,—a man of prodigious learning,—was a zealous opponent of Erastianism, and wrote largely upon this subject at different periods of his life, and in opposition to different opponents, especially in the first and last parts of his great work, "Politica Ecclesiastica,"—the first published in 1663, and the last in 1676. His principal antagonist upon this subject was Lewis du Moulin, or Ludovicus Molinæus, a son of the famous Molinæus, who took so active a part in the Arminian controversy, and was long the leading divine in the Protestant Church of France. Lewis settled in England, and obtained a chair in Oxford during the Commonwealth. He adopted Independent, or Congregational, views on church government, chiefly, it would appear, because he thought them more favourable to Erastianism than Presbyterian principles,—a notion for which he could plead the authority of Congregational divines of the highest eminence,—namely, the five dissenting brethren, as they were called, in the Westminster Assembly. They, in their "Apologetical Narration," had asserted that they gave as much, or, as they thought, more, power to the civil magistrate in religious matters than the principles of Presbyterians would allow them to do,—a declaration which, whether it be regarded as made honestly or hypocritically, has been very galling to those who have succeeded them in the maintenance of Congregational principles. Du Moulin wrote at least four books in defence of Erastianism,—one in English, entitled, "Of the Right of Churches, and of the Magistrate's Power over them;" and three in Latin, the first and most important entitled, "Parenesis ad ædificatores imperii in imperio,"—the allegation, that scriptural and Presbyterian views about the independence of the church of Christ establish an *imperium in imperio*, having been

always, as I have explained, the favourite argument of Erastians; and the other two entitled, “*Jugulum causæ*” and “*Papa Ultrajectinus*,”—the pope of Utrecht being Voetius, and the title being intended to insinuate, as is often done still, that the principles of Presbyterians upon this subject are the same as those of the Church of Rome.

I have gone on to notice Voetius and his antagonist Du Moulin, that I might finish what I had to say about this controversy, as it had been conducted in Holland during the seventeenth century. I now turn to Great Britain, where the Erastian controversy broke out at the time of the Westminster Assembly. A very excellent account of the controversy, as then conducted, will be found in the fourth chapter of Dr Hetherington’s very valuable “*History of the Westminster Assembly*.” I can only mention, that the two principal works produced at this period in defence of Presbyterian, and in opposition to Erastian, principles, are Gillespie’s “*Aaron’s Rod Blossoming*,” and Rutherford’s “*Divine Right of Church Government*,” both published in 1646,—Gillespie’s work being much more luminous, and much better digested, than Rutherford’s; and the second book of it being, perhaps, upon the whole, the best work to be read, in order to obtain a comprehensive view of the principles of the Erastian controversy. The chief Erastian book of this period is Selden, “*De Synedriis*,” which is directed to the object of assailing Presbyterian principles, with materials derived from the Old Testament and the Jewish polity,—materials which are discussed in the first book of Gillespie’s “*Aaron’s Rod Blossoming*.”

There was little discussion upon this subject in England after the Restoration. The controversy was then transferred to Scotland, where the Presbyterian Nonconformists, in defending their refusal to submit to the ecclesiastical establishment then imposed upon the nation, not only objected to the intrinsic unlawfulness of the things imposed, but to the sinful usurpation of the rights of Christ, and of His church, exhibited by the civil authorities in imposing them, and were thus led to expound the principles by which the interference of the civil authorities, in regard to religious matters, ought to be regulated. The principal works in which their views upon this subject were set forth are—Brown of Wamphray’s “*Apologetical Relation*,” published in 1665; the “*Apology for the Oppressed, Persecuted Ministers and Profes-*

sors of the Presbyterian Reformed Religion," in 1677; and Forrester's "Rectius Instruendum," etc., in 1684. There has not, from that period till our own day, been much discussion upon this subject in Scotland. Brown of Wamphray, while in exile in Holland, published, in 1670, an important and valuable work on this subject, entitled, "*Libertino-Erastianæ Lamberti Velthusii Sententiæ, de Ministerio, Regimine, et Disciplinâ Ecclesiasticâ Confutatio*," which is well worthy of perusal.

These are the chief eras or occasions of the discussion of the Erastian controversy, or of the principles that ought to regulate the provinces, functions, and duties of the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities, and of their relation to each other; and these are the principal books from which a knowledge of these subjects, and of the way in which they have been discussed, ought to be derived. There are several other interesting departments of the controversy, a knowledge of which tends to throw some light upon it, but to which I can merely allude: such as, first, the controversy in France during the seventeenth century, on the subject of the Gallican Liberties, in which Richer, Fleury, Dupin, and Bossuet, being preserved by their Popery from the opposite extreme of Erastianism, but being occupied in establishing the entire independence of the civil upon the ecclesiastical, that they might refute the Pope's claims to temporal jurisdiction, direct or indirect, arrived at the same general conclusions as Presbyterians,—though they advanced to them from an opposite direction,—as to the proper relation between the civil and the ecclesiastical; secondly, the discussions carried on in England after the Revolution by the Nonjurors, especially Leslie, Hickes, Dodwell, and Brett, in which, though greatly hampered by their admission of the ecclesiastical supremacy of the Crown, as set forth in the Articles and Canons of the Church of England, they made a fair approach to scriptural and Presbyterian principles about the independence of the church of Christ,—advocating views similar to those put forth in our own day upon this subject by the Tractarians; and, lastly, the thoroughly Erastian views advocated in the end of the seventeenth century, and the early part of the eighteenth, upon philosophical, political, and historical grounds, by some eminent German lawyers and jurists, who were profoundly skilled in ecclesiastical history, especially Thomasius, Boehmer, and Puffendorf.



*Sec. IV.—Free Church of Scotland.*

This controversy has been revived in our own day, and in its practical consequences proved the immediate cause of the Disruption of the ecclesiastical establishment of this country, and of the formation of the Free Church of Scotland. The precise cause or ground of the Disruption was this,—that the civil authorities required of us to do, in the execution of our functions as ecclesiastical office-bearers, or in the administration of the ordinary necessary business of Christ's church, what was inconsistent with the word of God and the recognised constitution of the church; and that we refused to do what was thus required of us,—first, because the things required to be done were in themselves wrong, sinful, opposed to the mind and will of God as revealed in His word, and to the interests of true religion; and, secondly, because to have done them on the ground on which obedience was required of us,—namely, submission to the alleged law of the land,—would have been an aggravation, instead of a palliation, of the sin, as it would have involved, *in addition*, a sinful recognition of the sinful usurpation, by civil authorities, of a right to interfere in Christ's house, and to substitute their laws instead of His in the administration of the affairs of His kingdom. On these grounds we were compelled, for conscience sake, to abandon our connection with the State, and our enjoyment of the temporalities of the Establishment; and we could not have preferred any other ground on which we might have been called upon to testify for Christ's truth, and to suffer for His name's sake, than just that great principle which God in His providence seems to have specially committed to the custody of the Church of Scotland,—namely, the principle of Christ's sole right to rule in His own house,—to reign in His own kingdom,—to govern all its affairs by His own laws, and through the instrumentality of His own office-bearers. It is important to understand the principles on which the Free Church of Scotland is based, so that we may be able to intelligently explain and defend them; and to take care that, in so far as we are concerned, they shall be fully maintained, duly honoured, and faithfully applied.

The Free Church of Scotland having been formed in this way and upon this ground, was naturally led, while adhering to

the whole standards and principles of the Church of Scotland, and asserting her right to that designation in opposition to the present ecclesiastical establishment, to introduce into her Formulæ for license and ordination a more explicit reference to her peculiar standing and testimony; and to this point I would now, in conclusion, briefly advert. The principal changes which, since the Disruption, have been made upon the Formulæ are these: first, the substitution of the word Erastian for the word Bourignian in the third question, and the introduction of the fifth question bearing more immediately upon the causes and grounds of the Disruption, and the special standing and testimony of the Free Church. By the old Formulæ, originally adopted in 1711, and still used in the Establishment, probationers and ministers are required to renounce all Popish, Arian, Socinian, Arminian, Bourignian, and other doctrines, tenets, and opinions contrary to the Confession of Faith. As Mrs Antonia Bourignon is now almost wholly forgotten, we did not think it necessary to retain a renunciation of her errors, and have, in consequence, substituted Erastian in this question instead of Bourignian, as we consider it an important branch of present duty to bear public testimony against Erastianism, and think we can easily prove that Erastian tenets, contrary to the Confession of Faith, are held by many in the present day who have subscribed it.

The fifth question, introduced into the Formula for the purpose above mentioned, is this, "Do you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, as King and Head of His church, has therein appointed a government in the hands of church officers, distinct from, and not subordinate in its own province to, civil government, and that the civil magistrate does not possess jurisdiction, or authoritative control, over the regulation of the affairs of Christ's church? And do you approve of the general principles embraced in the Claim, Declaration, and Protest adopted by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1842, and in the Protest of ministers, and elders, and commissioners from presbyteries to the General Assembly, read in presence of the Royal Commissioner on the 18th May 1843, as declaring the views which are sanctioned by the word of God, and the standards of this church, with respect to the spirituality and freedom of the church of Christ, and her subjection to Him as her only head, and to His word as her only standard?"

I can only add one or two explanatory notes on this question. It consists of two parts: the first asks assent to certain doctrines in regard to the constitution of Christ's church and the relation between the civil and ecclesiastical authorities; and the second, to the *general principles* embodied in certain documents. It is expressly laid down in the Confession of Faith, that "Christ, as King and Head of the church, has therein appointed a government, in the hands of church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate." We know, from the explicit testimony of Baillie, that this statement was introduced into the Confession for the express purpose of condemning Erastianism. The able and learned Erastians of that age saw, *and admitted*, that it cut up Erastianism by the roots, and, in consequence, exerted themselves, and successfully, to prevent the English Parliament from sanctioning that part of the Confession. It was often found, in the recent controversies against the Erastians of our day,—who are neither able nor learned,—that they must either renounce the views they entertained and the course they pursued, or else abandon this doctrine of the Confession, which they had subscribed. We still regard this great truth as warranting the whole course which *we* pursued in our contest with the civil authorities, as it is sanctioned by the law of the land as well as the word of God; and we still proclaim it to be the ground and basis of our peculiar standing and testimony in regard to the spirituality and freedom of the church, and its relation to Christ as its only head. The additional matter introduced into the statement of doctrine in the first part of this question, we regard as implied in, or deducible from, that doctrine of the Confession which forms the basis of it, and as fitted only to bring out more fully and explicitly its import and application as subversive of all Erastianism. If the government which Christ has established in His church be distinct from civil magistracy, it cannot be subordinate in its own province to civil government. The distinctness of the two naturally implies the non-subordination of the one to the other; and this of itself must be held to be conclusive upon the point, unless it could be proved that Christ has expressly subordinated the one to the other,—a position which, though it is the only legitimate foundation of frank and honest Erastianism, was never openly maintained by those Erastians with whom we have had to contend.

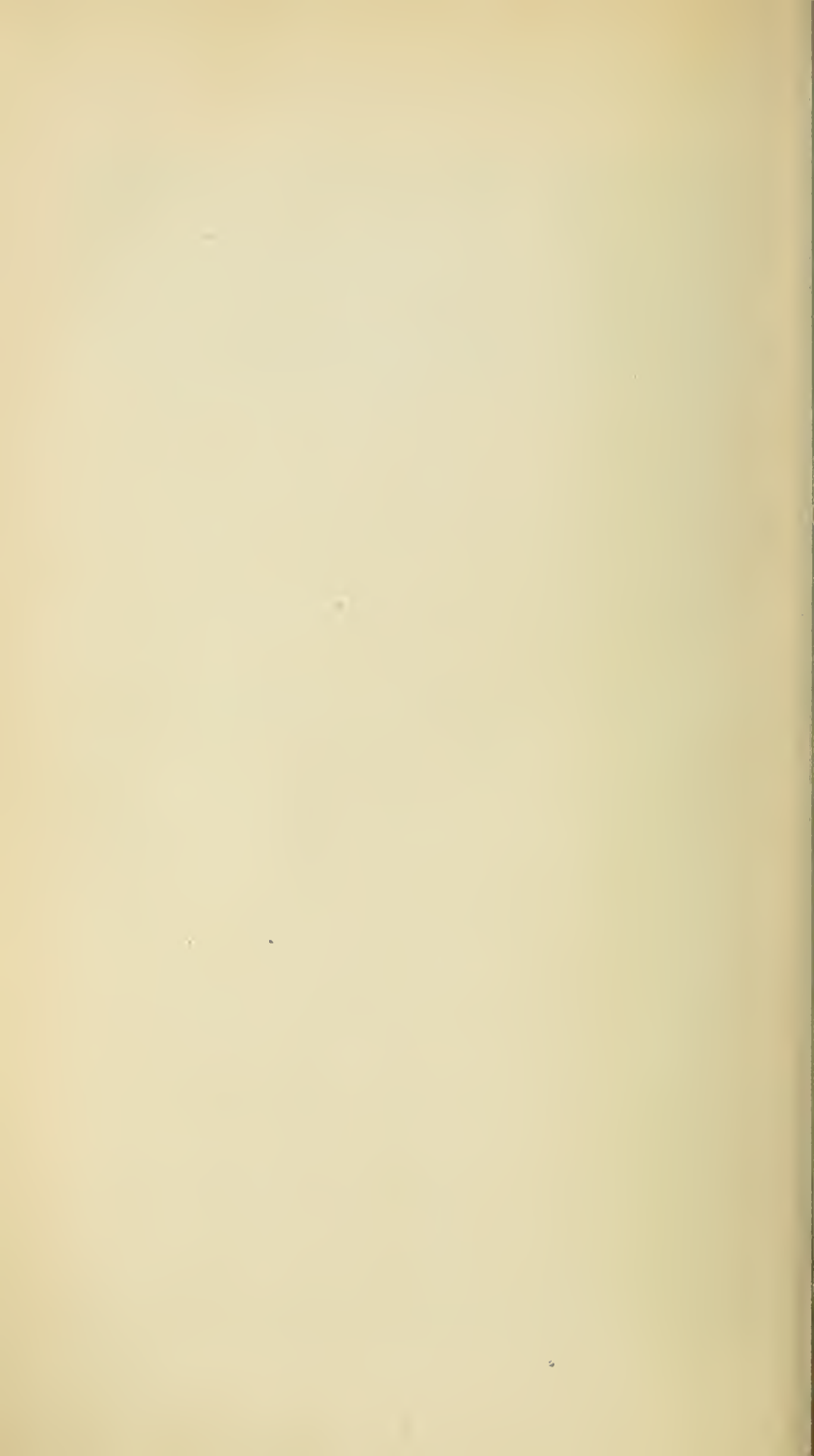
The non-subordination to civil government of the distinct

government which Christ has established in His church, naturally leads to the next position in the question, which is just an extension or amplification of what goes before, pointing it more directly and specifically against the proceedings that produced the Disruption,—namely, that the civil magistrate does not possess jurisdiction or authoritative control over the regulation of the affairs of Christ's church. It is also explicitly and formally asserted, in another position contained in the Confession,—namely, that the civil magistrate may not assume to himself the "power of the keys,"—a phrase which, according to the usage of divines, might include the administration of the word and sacraments, but which, when distinguished from these, as it evidently is in the Confession, *must* mean the exercise of jurisdiction in the regulation of the affairs of the church. Jurisdiction, or authoritative control, of course means a right to make laws for the regulation of the affairs of the church, which are to be obeyed from regard to the authority that enacted them, or to pronounce decisions which are to be obeyed, because pronounced by one to whom obedience in the matter is legitimately due. When any civil magistrate assumes such jurisdiction or authoritative control in the regulation of the affairs of Christ's church, he is guilty of sin; and when the church submits to the exercise of such jurisdiction, she too becomes a partaker of his sin, and is involved in all the guilt of it.

The Claim of Rights of 1842, and the Protest of 1843,—the two documents described in the second part of the question,—consist, to a large extent, of the proofs and evidences, that the interferences of the civil authorities with the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs were violations of the constitution of the country, and of the laws of the land; and, therefore, it is only to the general principles embodied in them that assent is required. And these general principles are just those which are set forth in the first part of the question; while the reference to these documents at once connects together scriptural doctrines, constitutional principles, and important historical transactions,—all combined in setting forth the distinctive standing and testimony of the Free Church of Scotland, and in fully vindicating the position she now occupies, and the general course of procedure, on her part, which led to it. These are the only very material changes which have been introduced into our Formulæ for license and ordination, subsequently to, and in consequence of, the Disruption. They



are directed solely to the object of bringing out more fully and prominently our distinctive principles and our peculiar testimony ; while both by what we have retained, and by what we have changed and added, we at once declare and establish our claim to be regarded as the true Church of Scotland,—the inheritors and possessors both of the principles and the rights of those by whom that church was reformed, first from Popery, and then from Prelacy and the ecclesiastical supremacy of the Crown.



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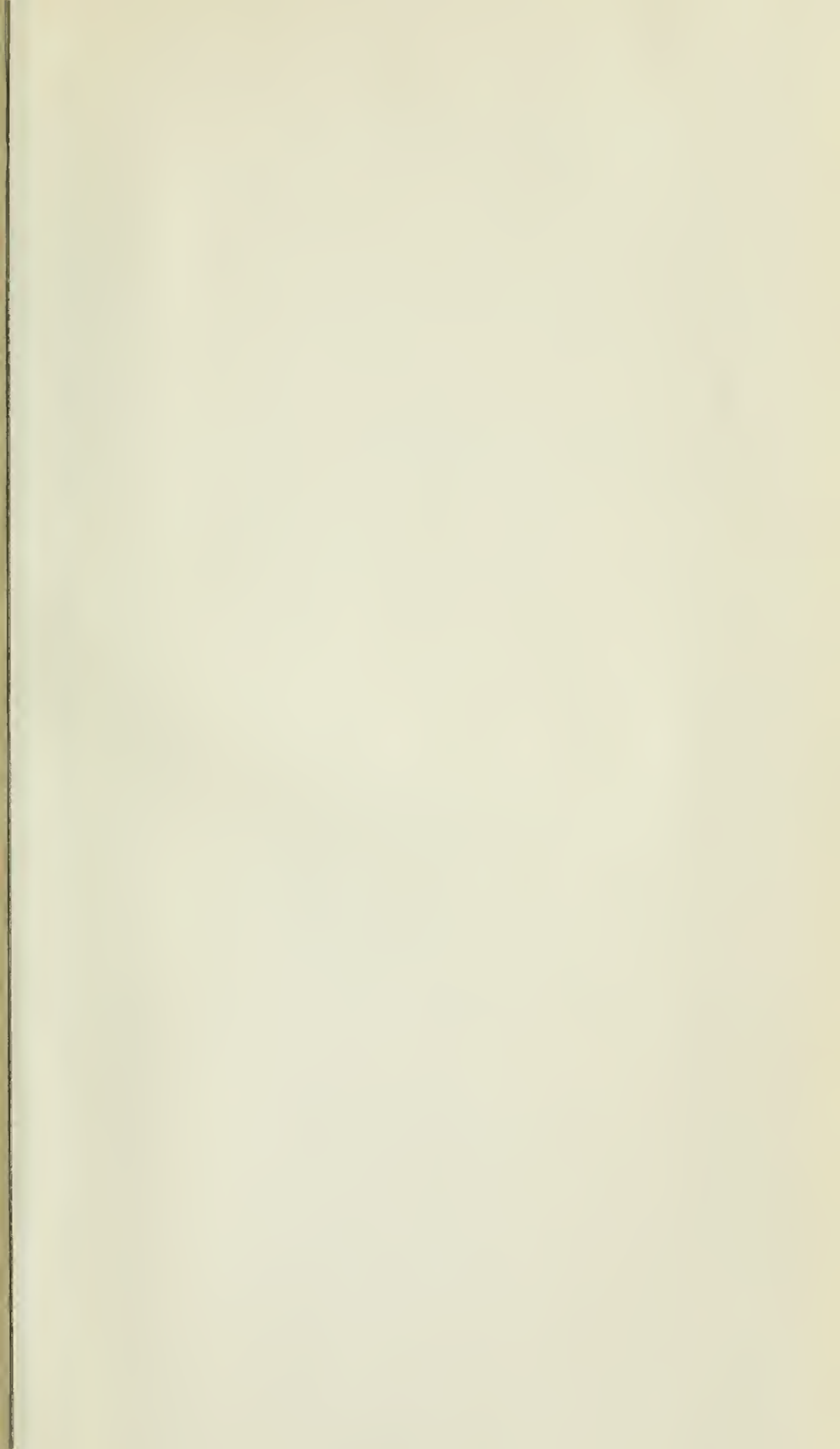
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